

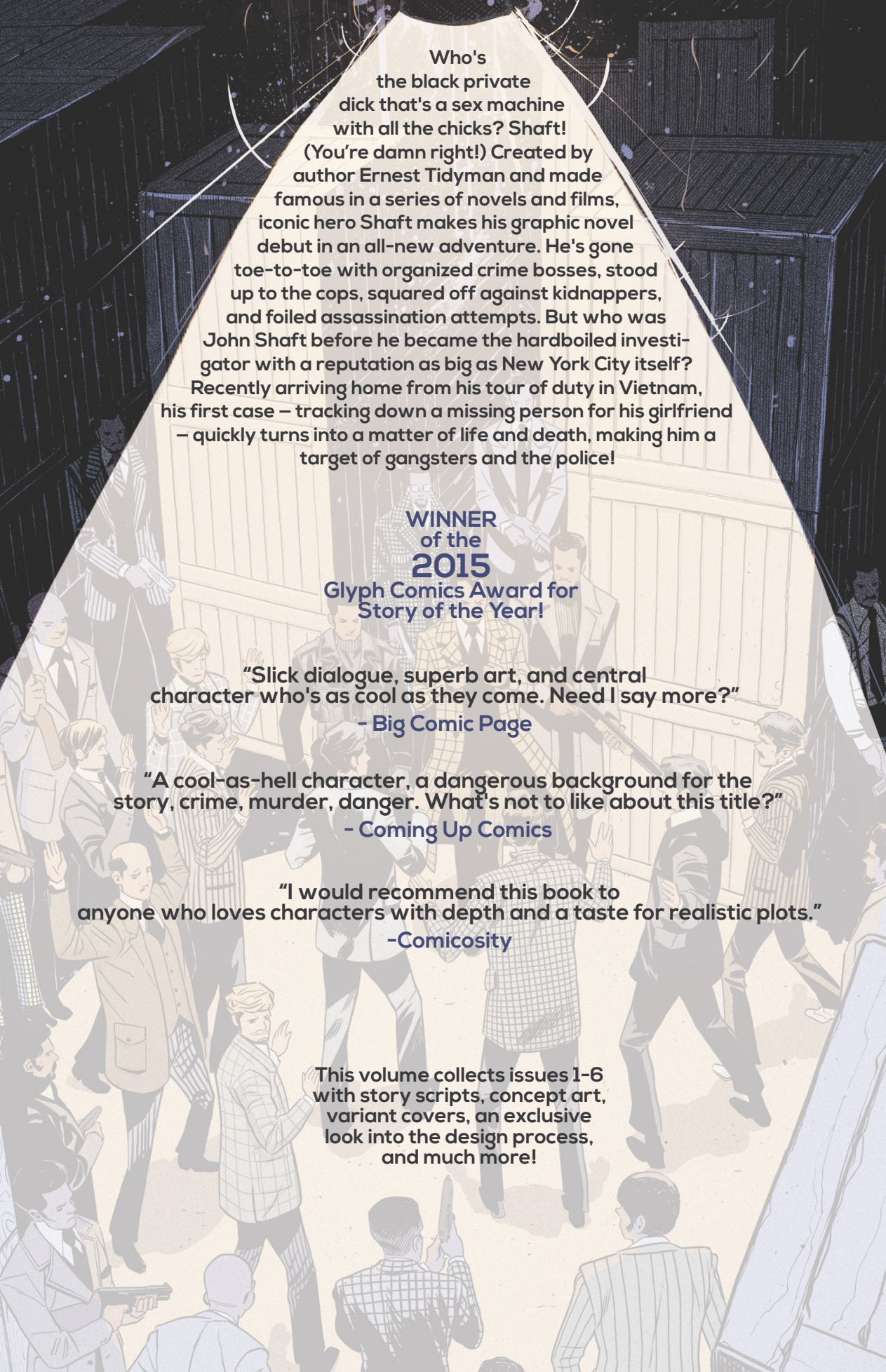
DAVID F. WALKER • BILQUIS EVELY

SHAFT



DYNAMITE

A COMPLICATED MAN.



Who's
the black private
dick that's a sex machine
with all the chicks? Shaft!
(You're damn right!) Created by
author Ernest Tidyman and made
famous in a series of novels and films,
iconic hero Shaft makes his graphic novel
debut in an all-new adventure. He's gone
toe-to-toe with organized crime bosses, stood
up to the cops, squared off against kidnappers,
and foiled assassination attempts. But who was
John Shaft before he became the hardboiled investi-
gator with a reputation as big as New York City itself?
Recently arriving home from his tour of duty in Vietnam,
his first case – tracking down a missing person for his girlfriend
– quickly turns into a matter of life and death, making him a
target of gangsters and the police!

WINNER
of the
2015

**Glyph Comics Award for
Story of the Year!**

**"Slick dialogue, superb art, and central
character who's as cool as they come. Need I say more?"**

- Big Comic Page

**"A cool-as-hell character, a dangerous background for the
story, crime, murder, danger. What's not to like about this title?"**

- Coming Up Comics

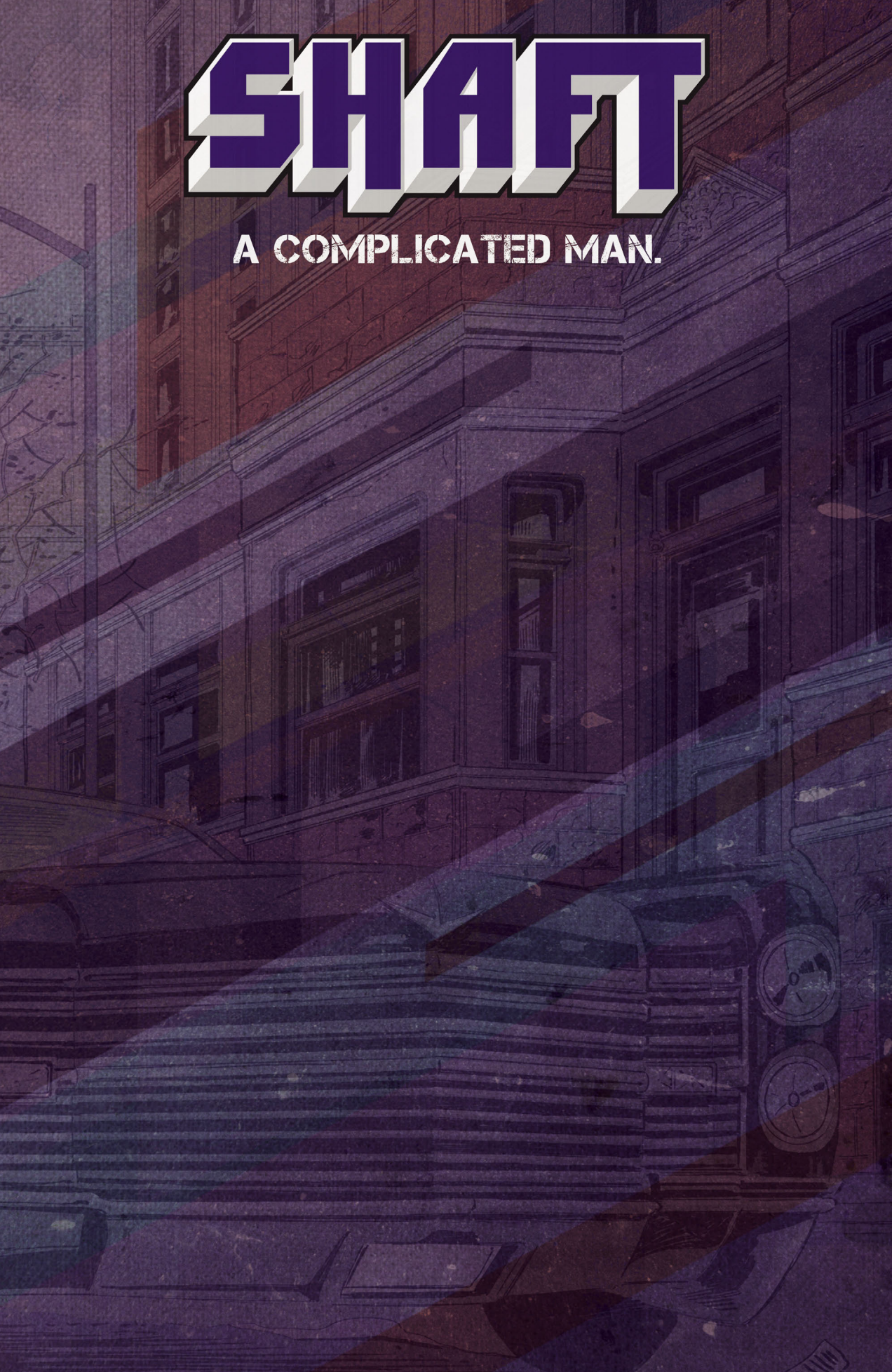
**"I would recommend this book to
anyone who loves characters with depth and a taste for realistic plots."**

-Comicosity

**This volume collects issues 1-6
with story scripts, concept art,
variant covers, an exclusive
look into the design process,
and much more!**

SHAFT

A COMPLICATED MAN.





DYNAMITE®

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SHAFT

**A COMPLICATED
MAN.**

SHAFT CREATED BY
ERNEST TIDYMAN

WRITTEN AND
LETTERED BY
DAVID F. WALKER

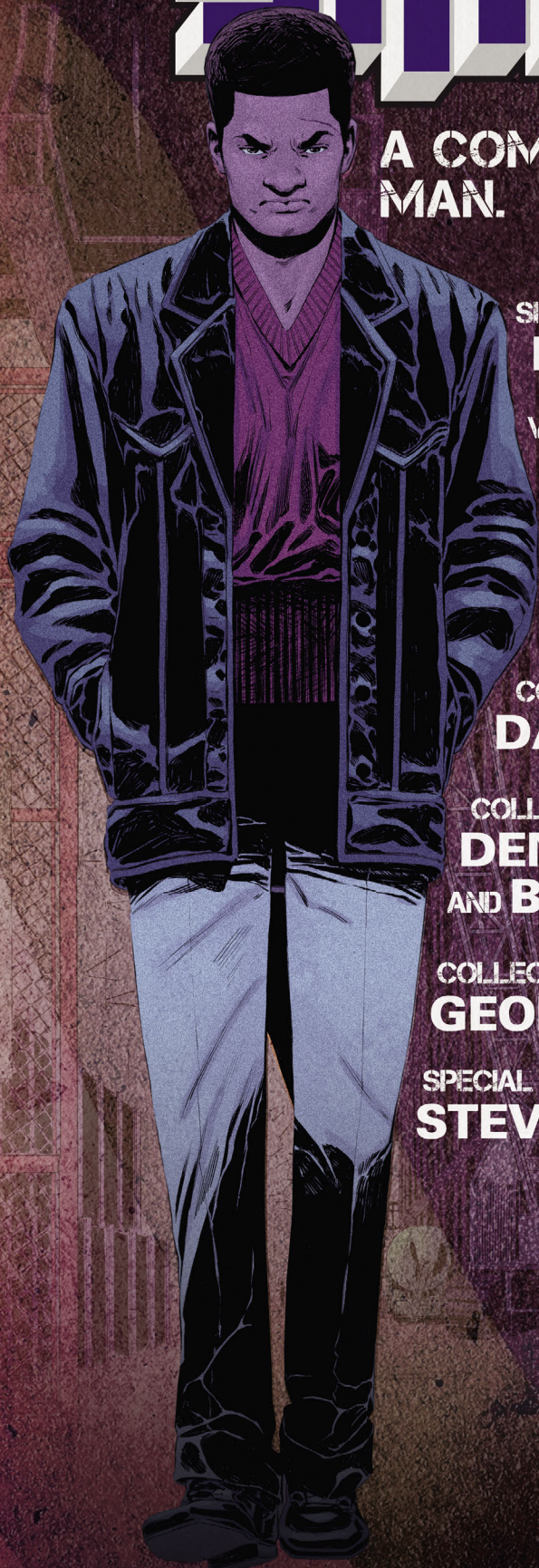
ILLUSTRATED BY
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COLORS BY
DANIELA MIWA

COLLECTION COVERS BY
**DENYS COWAN
AND BILL SIENKIEWICZ**

COLLECTION DESIGN BY
GEOFF HARKINS

SPECIAL THANKS TO
STEVE KASDIN



When I first heard that Detective John Shaft was going to have his own comic, I was incredulous. In this current racial climate, especially in comic/geek culture, I figured that there was no way any publisher would be so daring. Then I heard that David F. Walker was going to write it, The BadAzz MoFo himself was going to write Shaft for Dynamite Entertainment. I thought, 'Do they know that David isn't going to pull any punches? Do they have any idea that Walker is one of the rawest dudes to walk the planet? Will they back him up when he accurately reflects the language and the violence of both the genre and the world of John Shaft?' David F. Walker is pretty much the leading authority on any and everything Blaxploitation, from films, to music, to literature. If anyone alive was going to do Shaft justice, it would be him.

When David asked me to write this, I wanted to say no. How would I ever be able to do justice to the collected edition of one of my favorite comics from the last several years? For many Black people, John Shaft is as folkloric as Robin Hood. Despite being created in the early 1970s by Ernest Tidyman as a James Bond analog, Shaft feels like he has been around for as long as African-Americans needed justice. Shaft is the direct descendant of mythical strong men Stagolee and High John De Conquer. While it would be ridiculously easy to pepper this forward with Shaft-isms referencing the nascent detective's sexual prowess and his general bad-assery, he deserves much more than overused pop culture sound bites. He deserves to be respected for the cultural icon that he is.

Seven novels (eight, if we include Walker's Shaft's Revenge), three original films, a short-lived television series, and one remake starring Samuel L Jackson in 2000 comprised the entire mythology of John Shaft. But we still did not know him. We knew of him, the adventures he had, and the villains he faced. Shaft's backstory was not so much shrouded in mystery, as it was never elucidated. That is until issue number one of Shaft exploded into comic shops.

As a die-hard comic book fan, I am a sucker for well-done origin stories. Few have been done better than what is collected here. We finally are made privy to what demons are driving John Shaft. We see the situations that were instrumental in forging the unstoppable urban avenger he will become.

As a die-hard Black comic fan, this book is one of the most important in my lifetime. It is so rare to see Black characters in comics, particularly those who are three-dimensional, virile, and non-stereotypical—John Shaft is no one's sidekick or emasculated token. When he appears, it is almost as if the entire panel expands. He owns his space and is the total focus of his world. John Shaft is the hero I (and so many other comic fans who rarely see themselves represented) need right now.

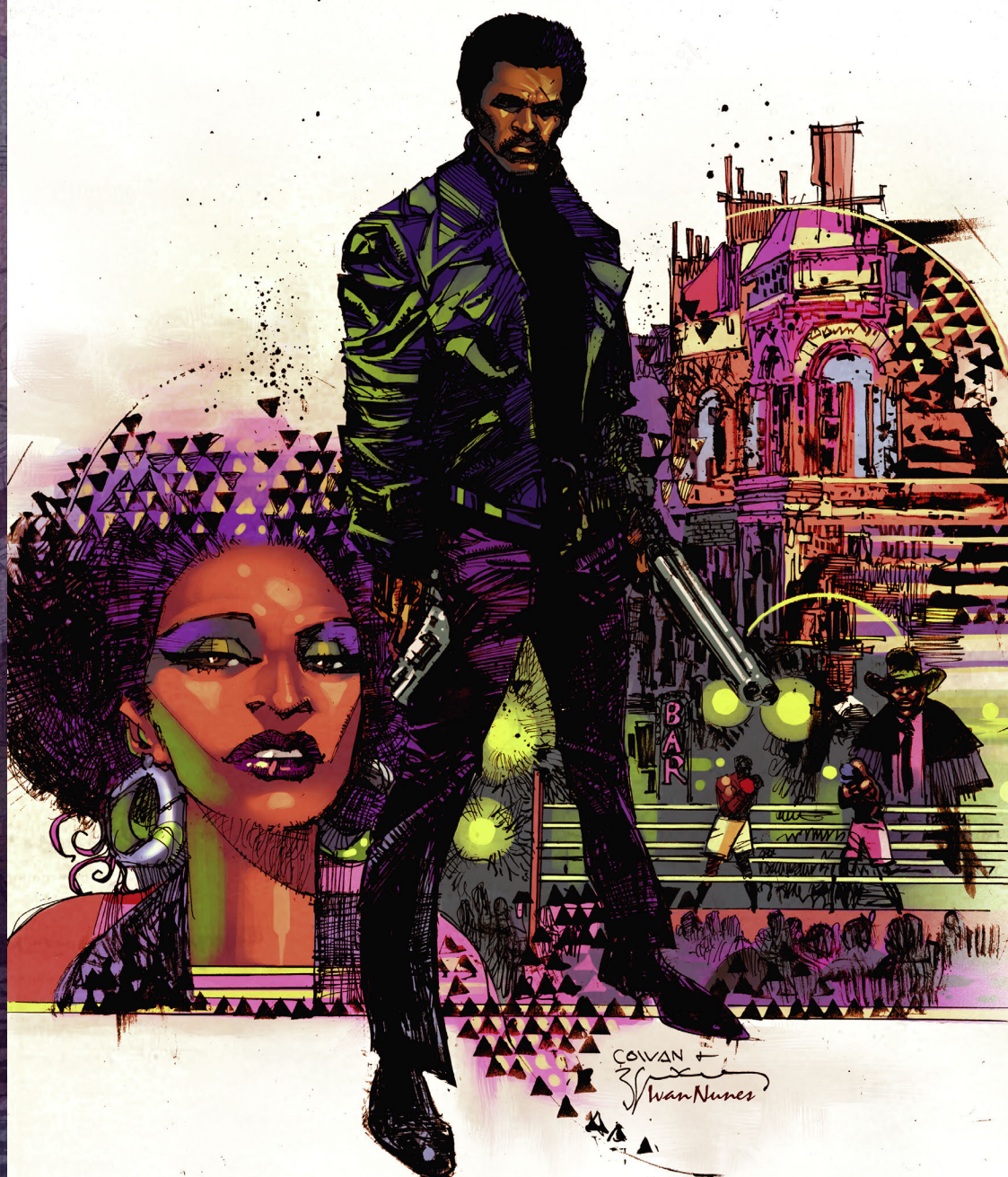
Now sit back, relax, and brace yourself for the adventures of the Harlem Knight.

Shawn Taylor, June 2015.

Shawn Taylor is the author of *Big Black Penis: Misadventures in Race and Masculinity*. He blogs for www.thenerdsofcolor.org, is a lecturer on popular culture and interdisciplinary humanities at San Francisco State University, and is the author of a forthcoming speculative fiction novel—his first foray into fiction.

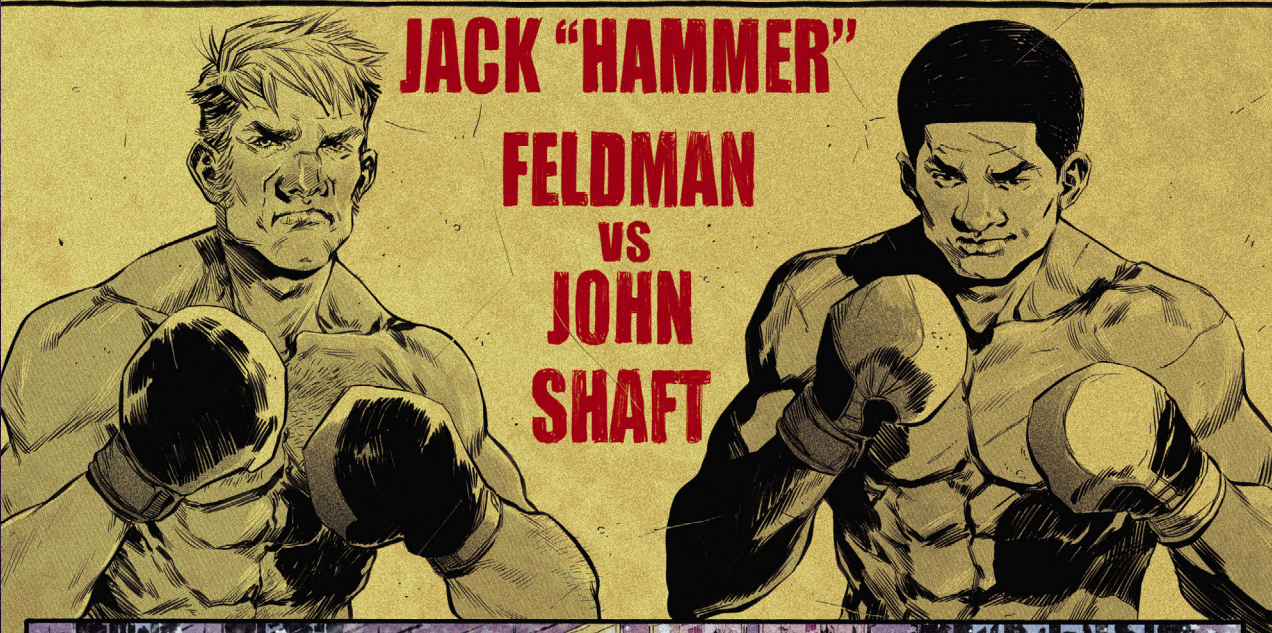
ISSUE ONE





ISSUE ONE MAIN COVER BY
DENYS COWAN AND **BILL SIENKIEWICZ**
COLORS BY **IVAN NUNES**

SUNNYSIDE GARDEN ARENA DEC. 2 1968



JACK "HAMMER"

FELDMAN

VS

JOHN

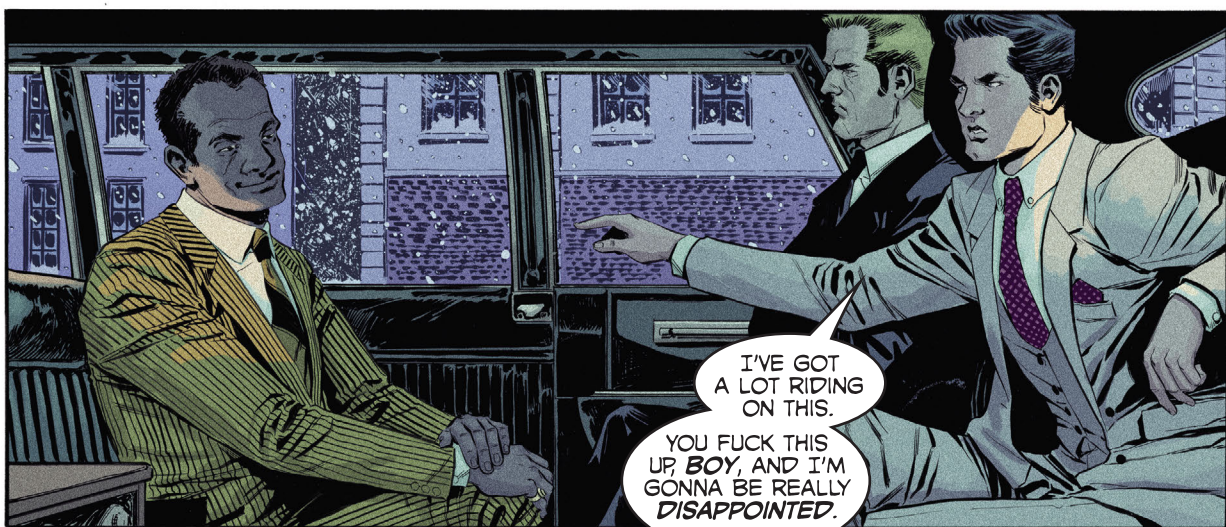
SHAFT

"MR. SAL, YOU BEEN
KNOWIN' ME A **LONG** TIME.
WORKED WITH YOUR DADDY
FOR A LOTTA YEARS..."

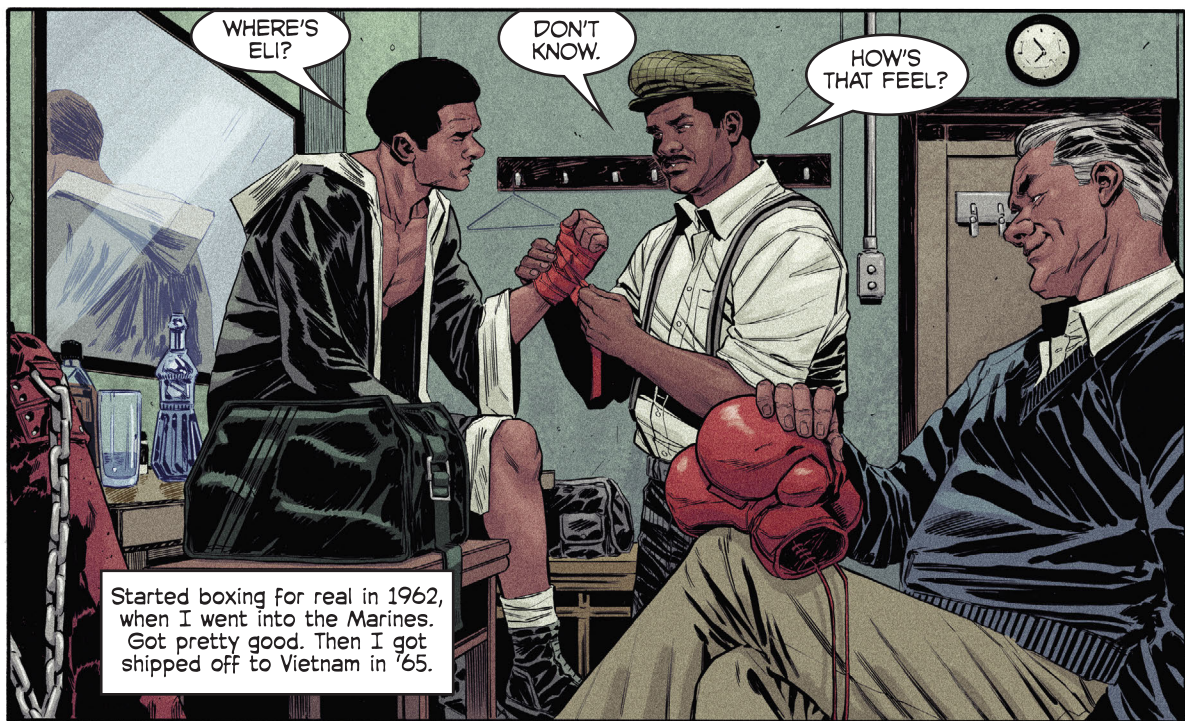
"I'M NOT MY FATHER,
SO SPARE ME THE USUAL
SHUCK-N-JIVE BULLSHIT."

I JUST WANT
TO KNOW **ONE**
THING...











Eli Jackson's my manager.
The **others** don't need
introductions.

Junius Tate. **Gangster.**
Works for Knocks Persons,
who runs Harlem.

Quiet one in the back
is Bamma Brooks.

HEY, JOHNNY.
READY FOR TONIGHT?
GOT SOME **FRIENDS**
I WANT YOU TO
MEET.

WHA'SUP,
YOUNGBLOOD?
BEEN HEARIN' LOTTA
GOOD THINGS
'BOUT YOU.

CATS 'ROUND
HARLEM SAY YOU
THE NEXT CASSIUS
CLAY.

When I was a kid,
Bamma Brooks was
the man -- the next
Joe Louis.

That never happened.
Took a dive in the fifth.
Became hired muscle
for Tate. Made me **sick**
to my stomach.

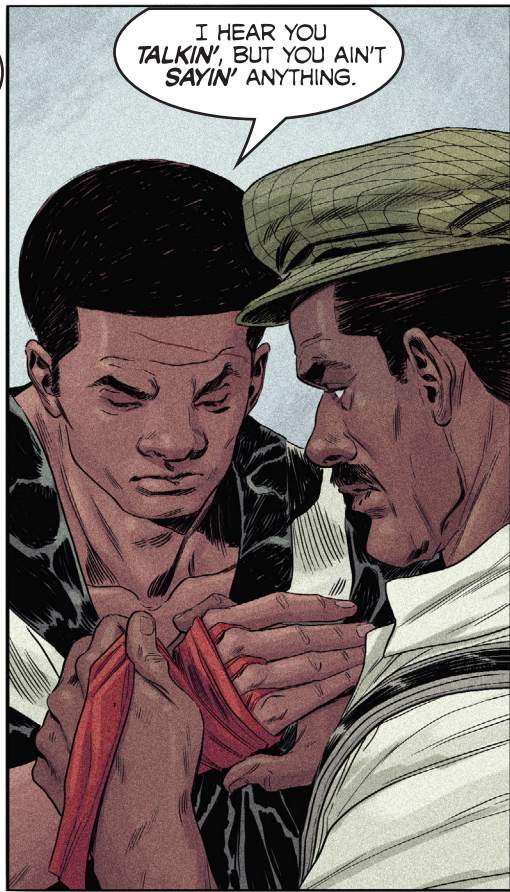


MAN GOES BY
MUHAMMAD ALI
THESE DAYS.

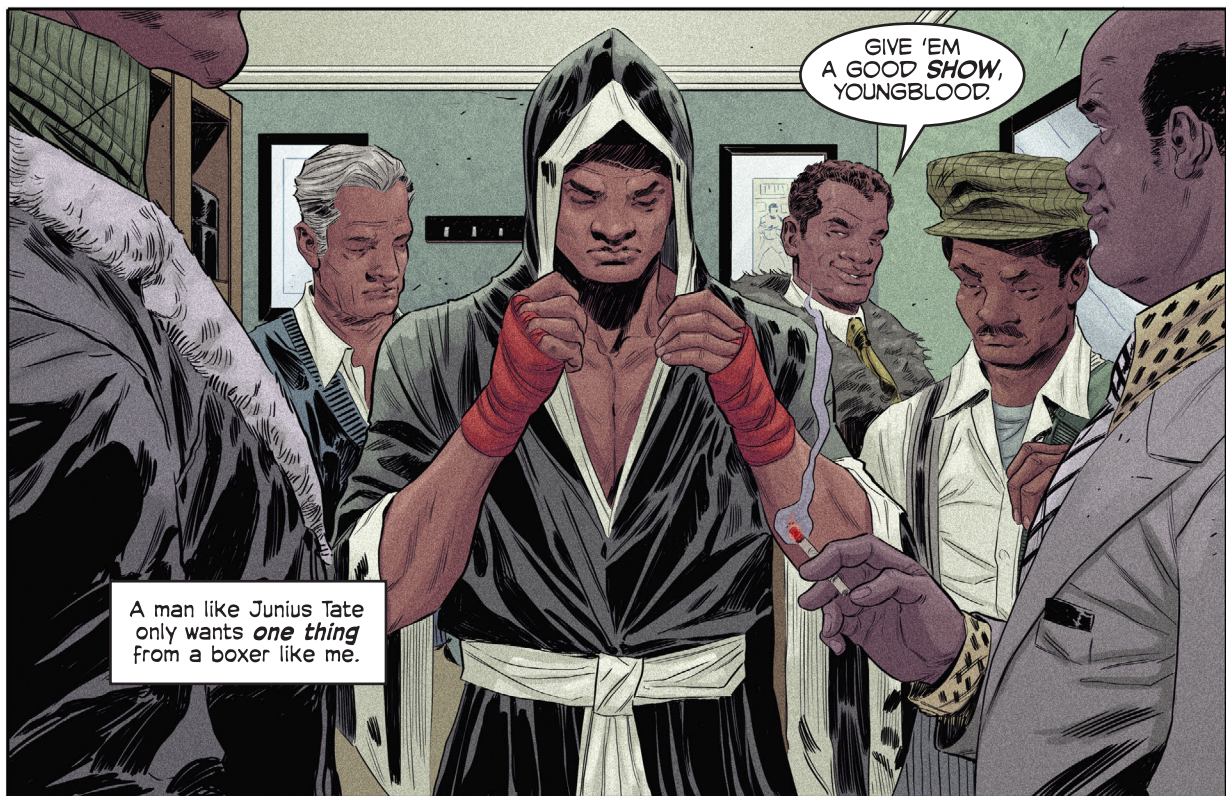


SHEEEEEEE-IT,
I DON'T CARE
WHAT THE FUCK
THE MOTHERFUCKER
CALLS HIMSELF.

NAMES DON'T
MEAN **SHIT** TO ME,
YOUNGBLOOD.

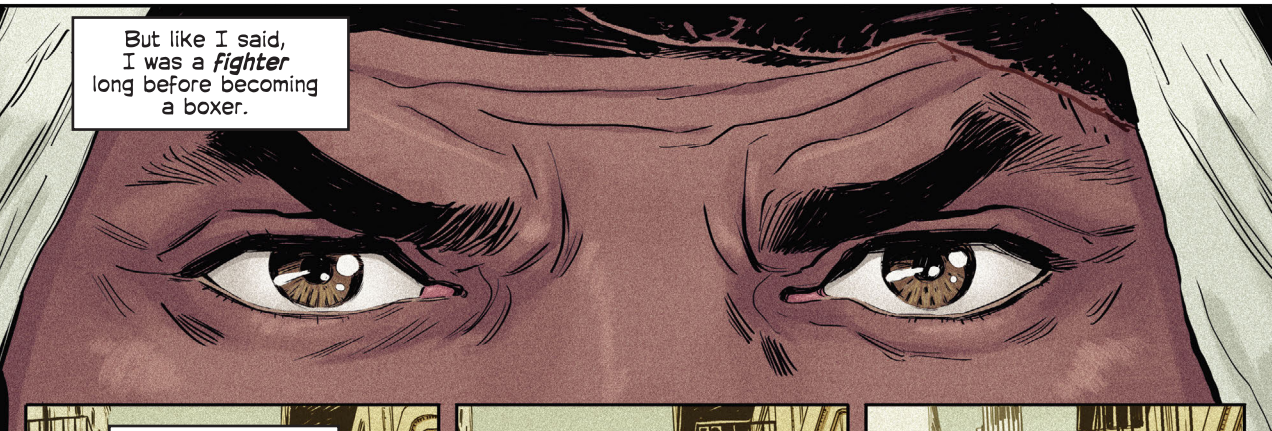


I HEAR YOU
TALKIN', BUT YOU AIN'T
SAYIN' ANYTHING.



GIVE 'EM
A GOOD *SHOW*,
YOUNGBLOOD.

A man like Junius Tate
only wants *one thing*
from a boxer like me.



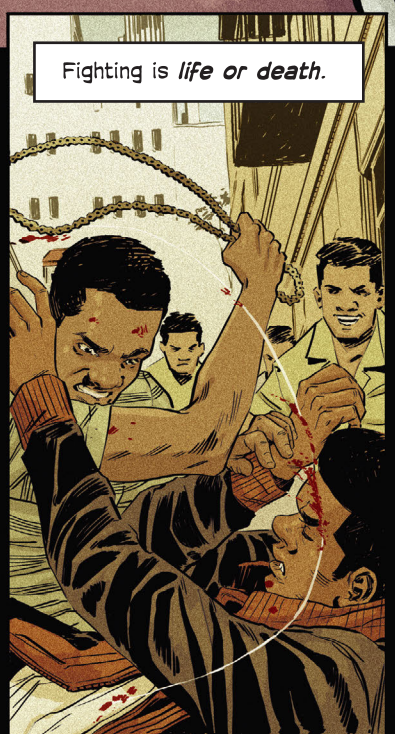
But like I said,
I was a *fighter*
long before becoming
a boxer.




You can't ask a
fighter to *give up*.



Boxing is a *sport*.




Fighting is *life or death*.




How we fight
determines how
we *live*.

How we live is
determined by the
choices we make
when we *fight*.

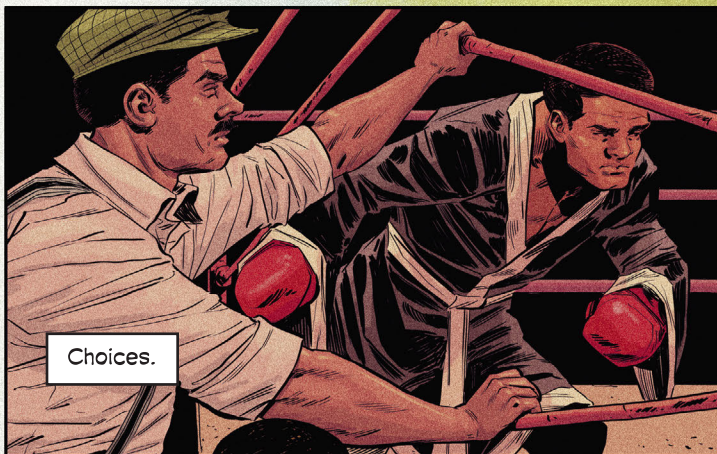
Choices.



When I was seventeen,
the judge gave me a *choice*:
Go to prison, or join the
military.



I chose to *not*
go to prison.



Choices.



During the war,
I *chose* to stay
alive.

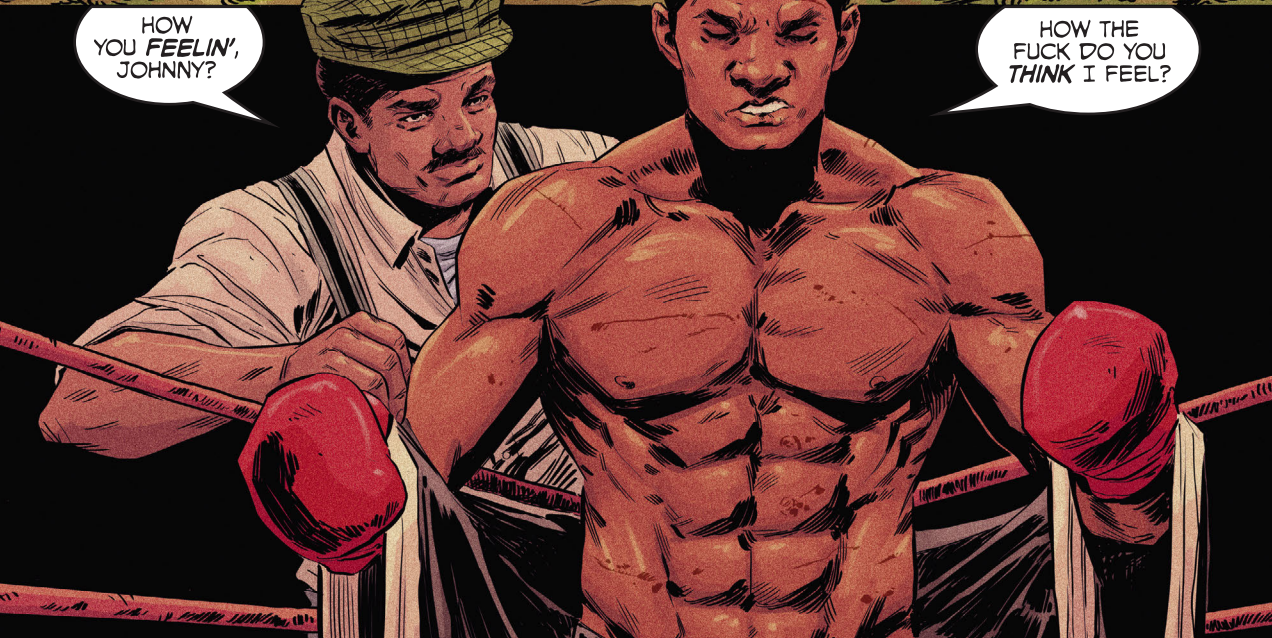


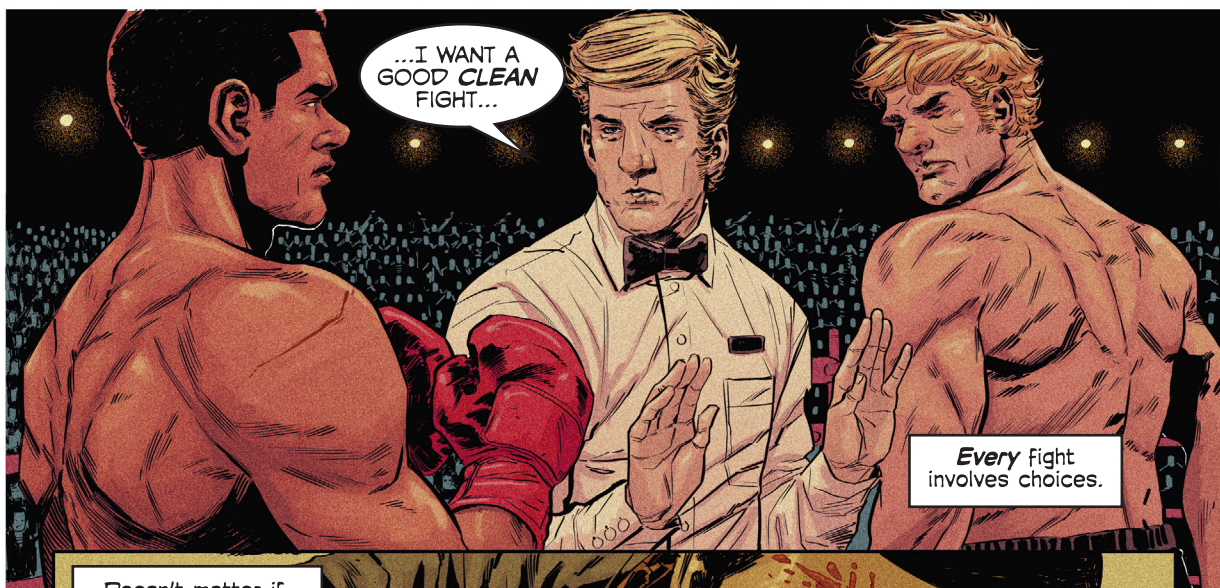
That choice came
with a *price*.



HOW
YOU *FEELIN'*,
JOHNNY?

HOW THE
FUCK DO YOU
THINK I FEEL?





...I WANT A
GOOD **CLEAN**
FIGHT...

Every Fight
involves choices.



Doesn't matter if
it's on the streets...

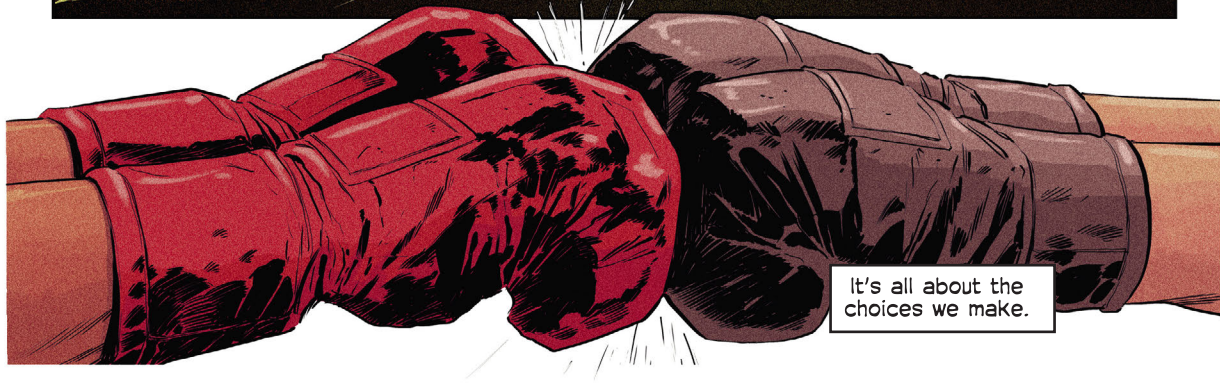


...**PROTECT**
YOURSELF AT
ALL TIMES...

...in the ring...



...or on the battlefield.



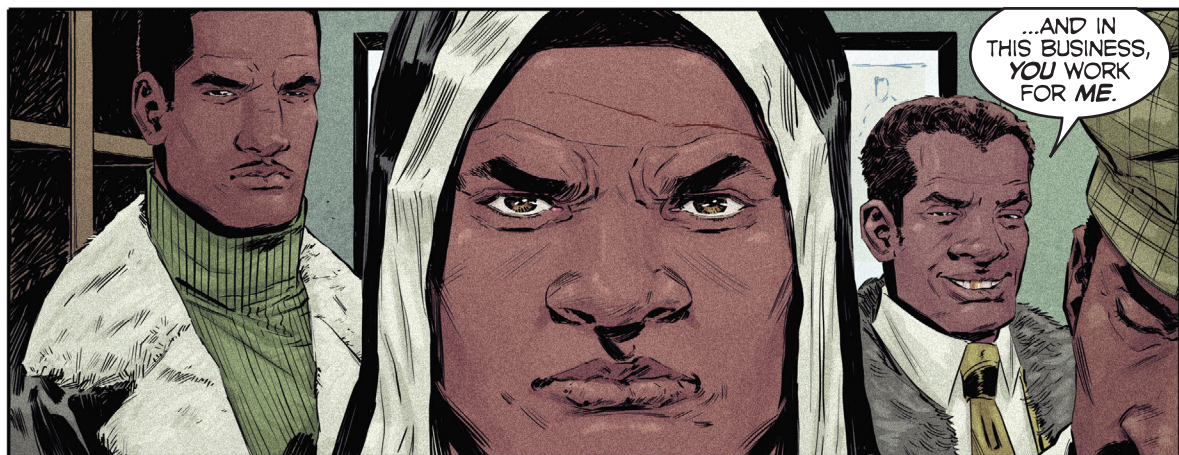
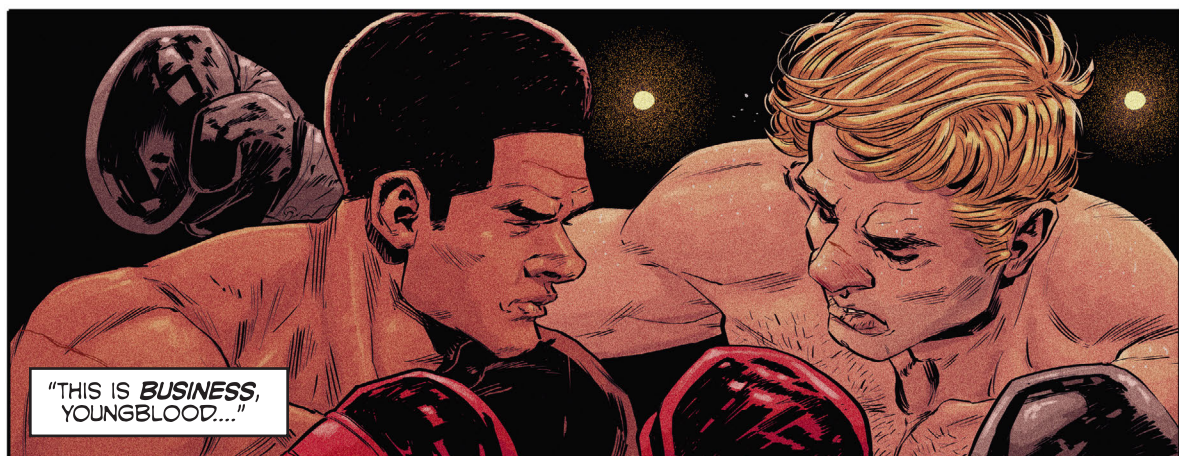
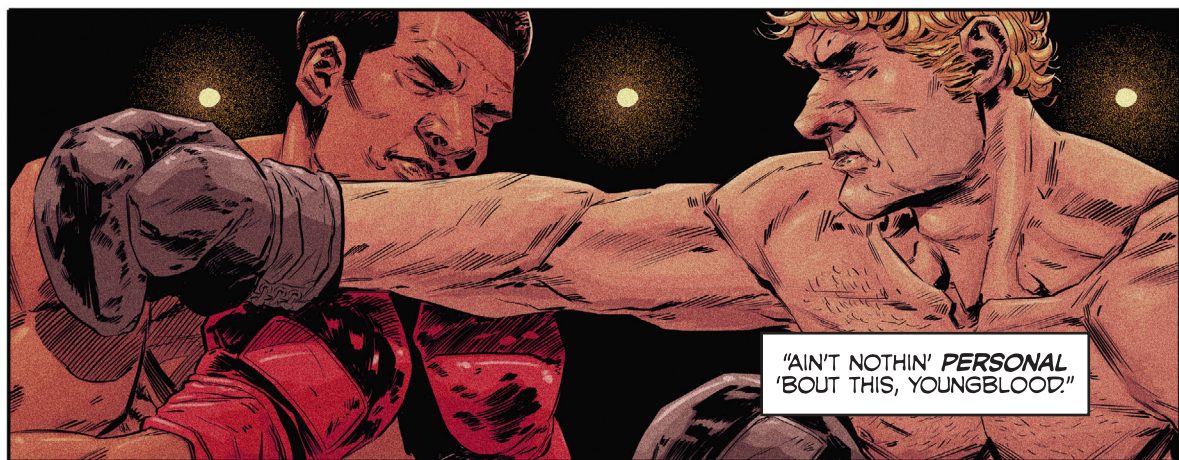
It's all about the
choices we make.

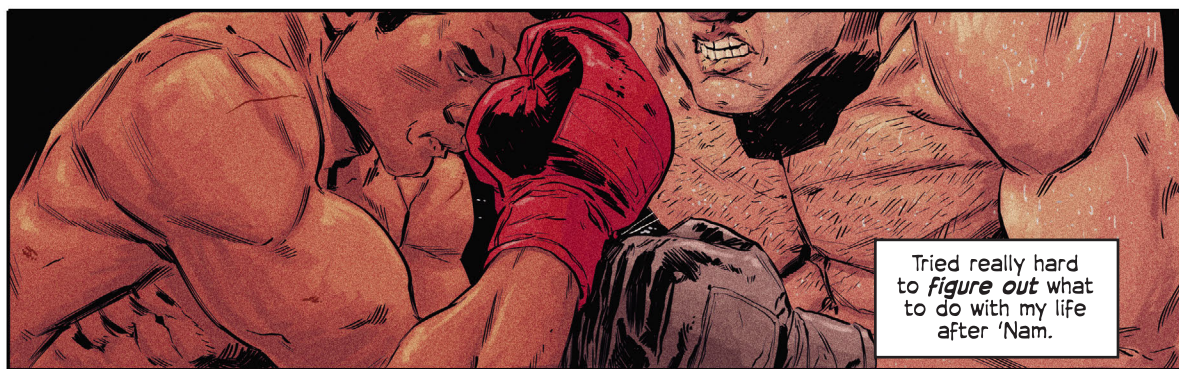
Ain't *nothing* like
the roar of a crowd
that wants to see
blood.

Except for maybe
the sound of incoming
mortar fire that wants
the *same* thing.

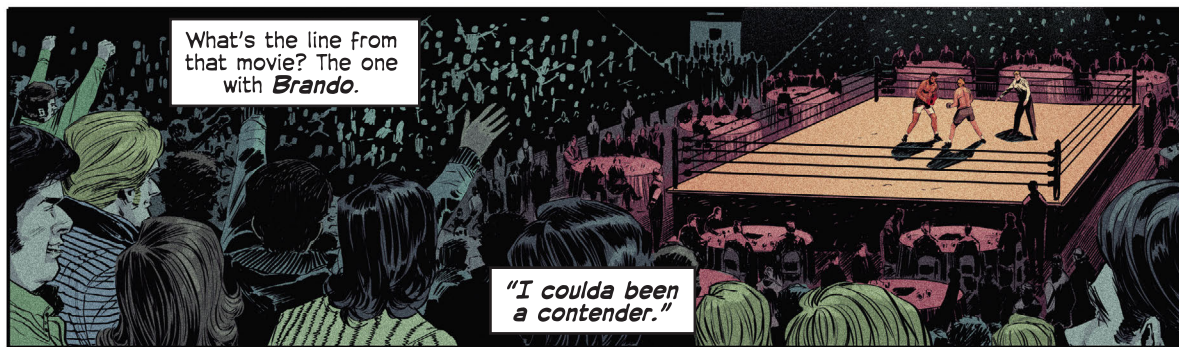
It's like God and the Devil,
both shouting from across a
crowded room, trying to get
your attention at the same time.





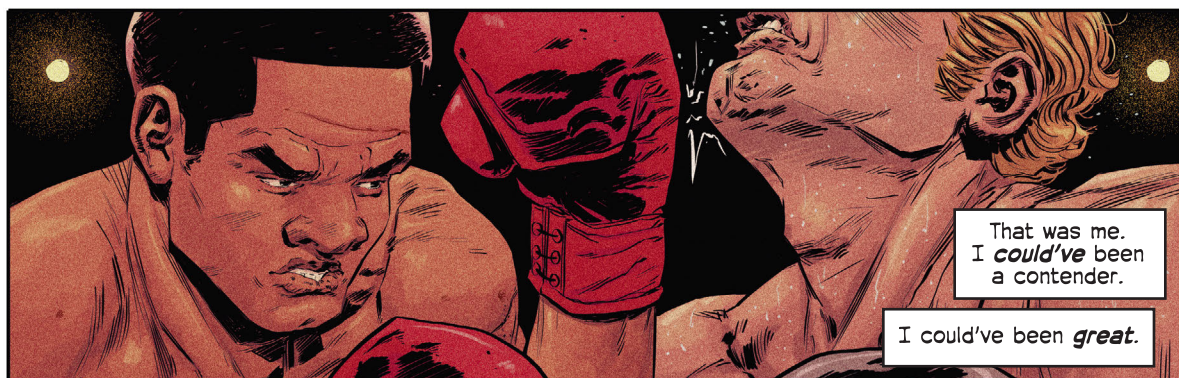


Tried really hard to *figure out* what to do with my life after 'Nam.



What's the line from that movie? The one with *Brando*.

"I *coulda* been a contender."

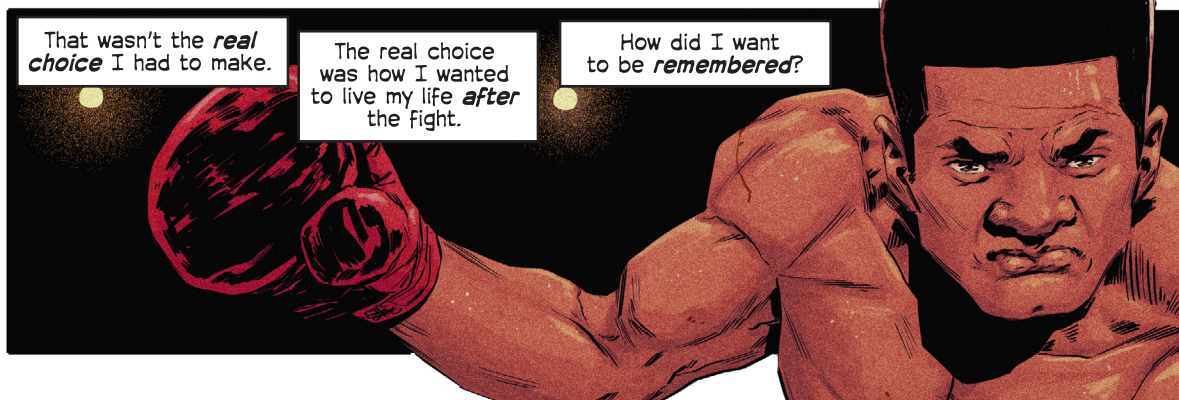


That was me. I *could've* been a contender.

I could've been *great*.



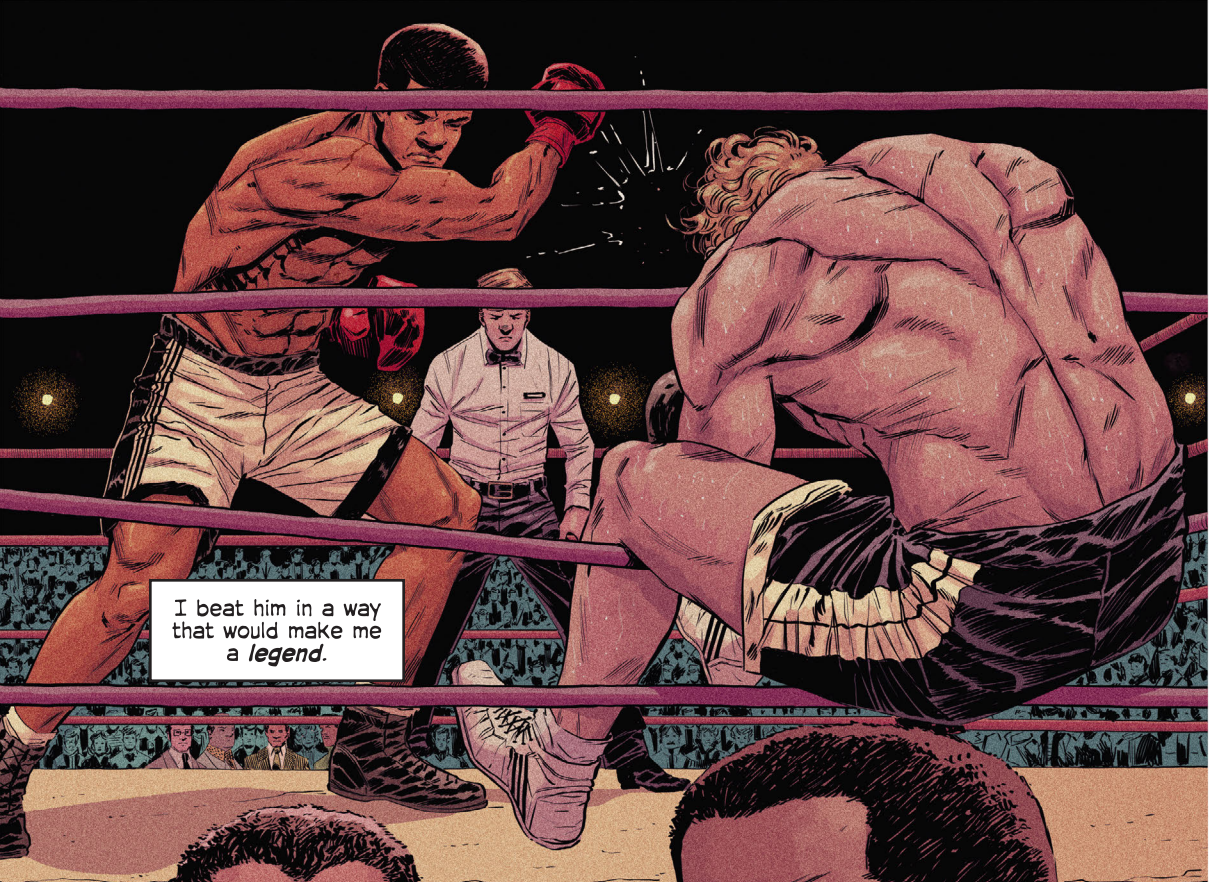
Three simple words changed everything--*take a dive*.




That wasn't the *real* choice I had to make.

The real choice was how I wanted to live my life *after* the fight.

How did I want to be *remembered*?



I beat him in a way
that would make me
a *legend*.



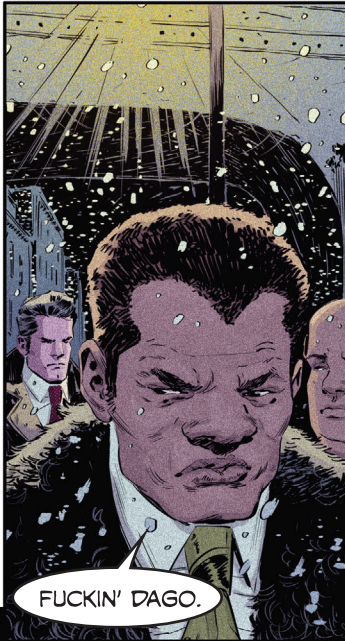
I beat him in a way
it would leave people
talking for a long time.



*Remember the time
John Shaft knocked that
motherfucker clean out
the ring?*

Better to be remembered for
standing up, than laying down.







WHAT'RE YOU DOING JUST HANGING AROUND?

YOU GOTTA GET THE HELL OUTTA HERE.

DO I LOOK LIKE I *GIVE* A SHIT?

YOU THINK JUNIUS TATE IS GONNA LET THIS *SLIDE*?

I'LL DO MY BEST, KID.

ANY SECOND, HE'S GONNA COME THROUGH THAT DOOR...

DOC CAN JUST *STITCH* ME BACK TOGETHER. AIN'T THAT RIGHT, DOC?

"JOHNNY, YOUR ASS IS *HUMPTY DUMPTY*, AND ALL THE KING'S HORSES, AND ALL THE KING'S MEN..."



YOU GOT *THAT* RIGHT.

...AIN'T GONNA BE ABLE TO PUT *YOU* BACK TOGETHER AGAIN.

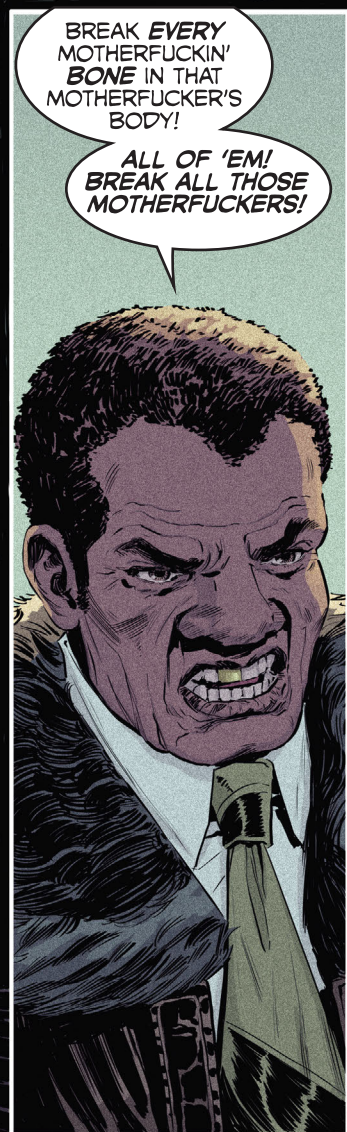




LET ME TAKE
CARE OF THIS, BOSS.
PERSONALLY.



MAKE SURE
TONIGHT IS THE FIRST
AND **LAST** NIGHT OF HIS
PROFESSIONAL BOXING
CAREER.



BREAK **EVERY**
MOTHERFUCKIN'
BONE IN THAT
MOTHERFUCKER'S
BODY!

ALL OF 'EM!
BREAK ALL THOSE
MOTHERFUCKERS!



Bamma Brooks used to be *somebody*.



WHAT
HAPPENED
TO YOU,
KID?



Used to be somebody
I looked up to.



GOT IN
A FIGHT.

That was a long time ago.



Learned a lot from
Bamma Brooks.



THAT'S THE
SPIRIT, KID.
NEVER
BACK AWAY
FROM A
FIGHT.

AND DON'T
LIE DOWN FOR
NOBODY.



NEVER.





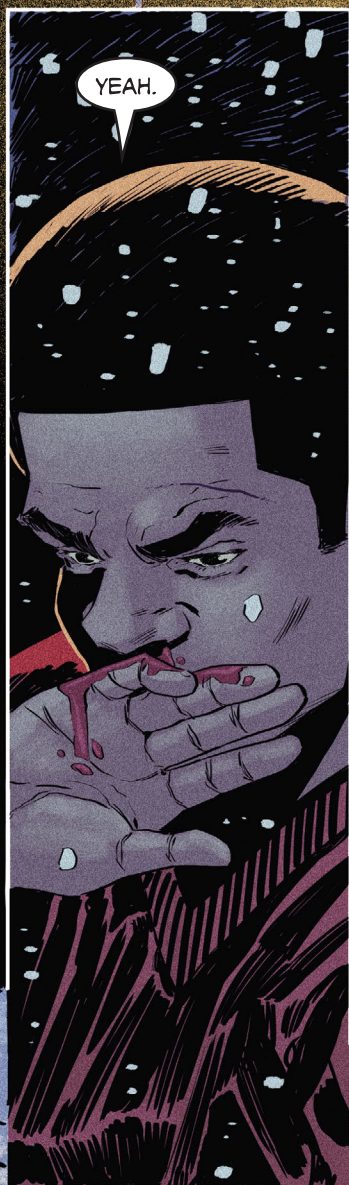
TAKES ABOUT
THREE MONTHS
FOR BROKEN BONES
TO HEAL.

SOMETIMES
LONGER.

BEST NOT LET
ANYONE NORTH OF
42nd STREET SEE YOU
WALKIN' 'ROUND IN ONE
PIECE, OR IT WILL BE
MY ASS.

AND THEN
IT WILL BE
YOUR ASS.

DIG WHAT
I'M SAYIN'?




YEAH.



YOU **OWE**
ME.

MIGHT COME
A DAY WHEN THIS
GORILLA DECIDES
TO CASH IN THAT
FAVOR.

AND ON
THAT DAY, YOU
BEST **REMEMBER**
THIS DAY.



Life is all about the choices we make--the decisions that *define* us.

Stand up.

Lie down.

Fight.

Don't fight.

I made my choice.

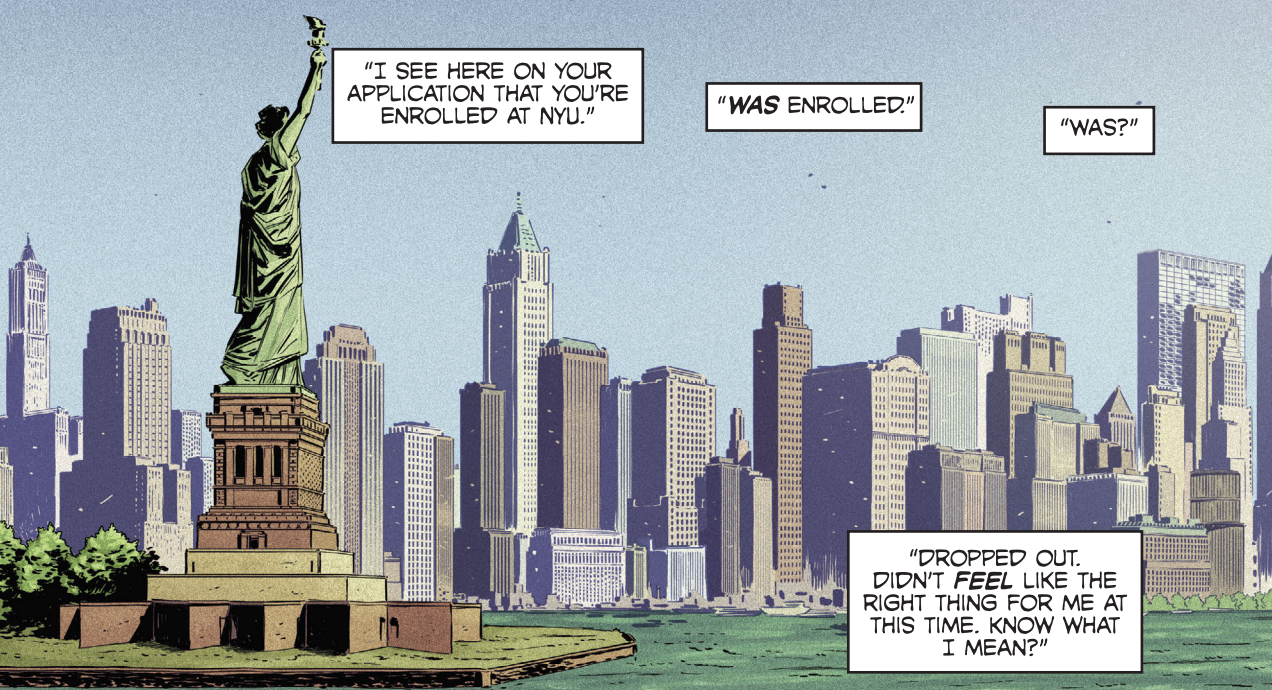
Now, all I had to do was decide what to do with the rest of my life.

ISSUE TWO





ISSUE TWO MAIN COVER BY
DENYS COWAN AND **BILL SIENKIEWICZ**
COLORS BY **IVAN NUNES**



"I SEE HERE ON YOUR APPLICATION THAT YOU'RE ENROLLED AT NYU."

"**WAS** ENROLLED."

"**WAS?**"

"DROPPED OUT. DIDN'T *FEEL* LIKE THE RIGHT THING FOR ME AT THIS TIME. KNOW WHAT I MEAN?"



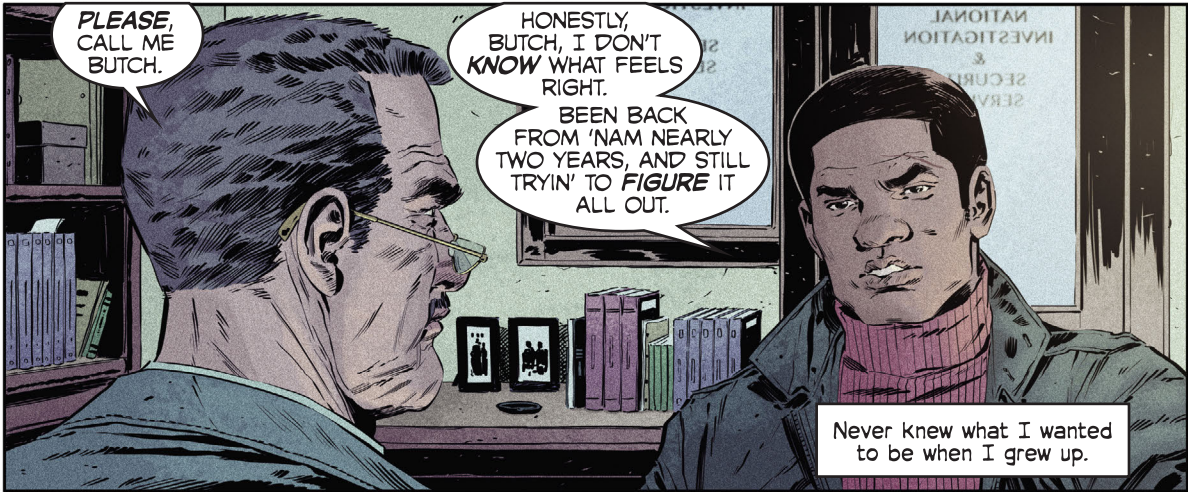
"AS A MATTER OF FACT, I *DO*."

"SO, I GOTTA DO *SOMETHING* WITH MY LIFE."



AND YOU THINK WORKING FOR NATIONAL INVESTIGATION COULD BE THAT *SOMETHING*?

HONESTLY, MR. BUCHINKSY...



PLEASE, CALL ME BUTCH.

HONESTLY, BUTCH, I DON'T *KNOW* WHAT FEELS RIGHT.

BEEN BACK FROM 'NAM NEARLY TWO YEARS, AND STILL TRYIN' TO *FIGURE* IT ALL OUT.

Never knew what I wanted to be when I grew up.



FELT THE **SAME** WAY WHEN I GOT BACK FROM KOREA IN '52.

NOT SO MUCH WHEN I GOT BACK FROM GERMANY IN '45.

BUT **THOSE** WERE DIFFERENT WARS.

CAN'T EVEN **IMAGINE** WHAT IT'S LIKE IN VIETNAM.

Then again, never really *thought* about growing up.



Only thought about *not* dying.

For me, not dying and growing up were the **same** thing.

IT'S WAR.
PEOPLE **KILLING** OTHER PEOPLE OVER REAL ESTATE.

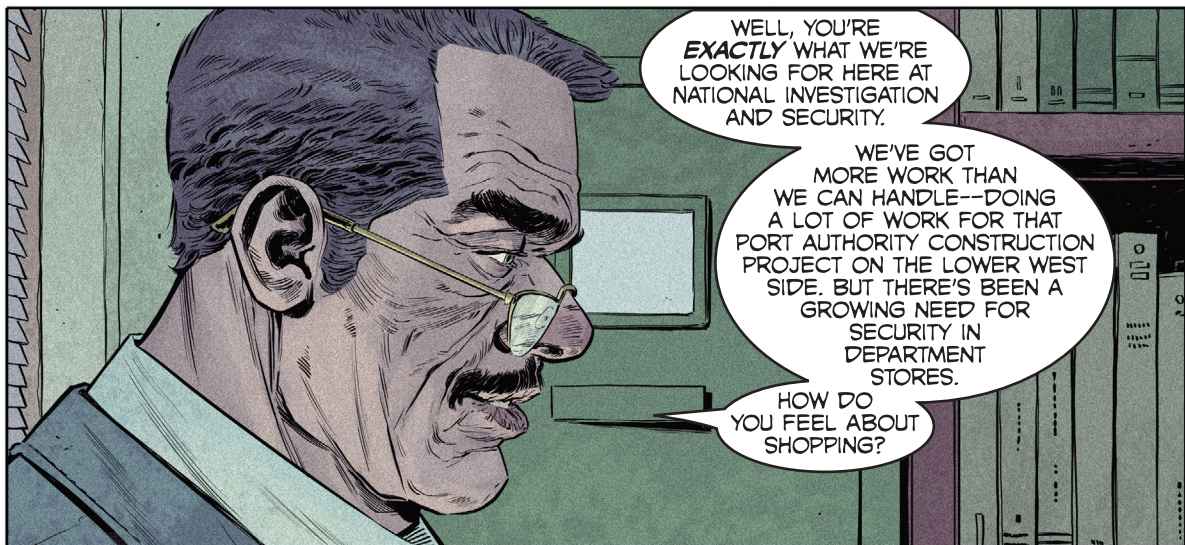


YOUR SERVICE RECORD IS **IMPRESSIVE**.
THREE TOURS OF DUTY.
PURPLE HEART. TWO BRONZE STARS.

SILVER STAR,
AND A DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS...

IT ALL LOOKS LIKE A BUNCH OF FRUIT SALAD PINNED TO MY CHEST.

Making it back alive from 'Nam, I figured I'd grown up.



WELL, YOU'RE **EXACTLY** WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR HERE AT NATIONAL INVESTIGATION AND SECURITY.

WE'VE GOT MORE WORK THAN WE CAN HANDLE--DOING A LOT OF WORK FOR THAT PORT AUTHORITY CONSTRUCTION PROJECT ON THE LOWER WEST SIDE. BUT THERE'S BEEN A GROWING NEED FOR SECURITY IN DEPARTMENT STORES.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT SHOPPING?



Tried some different things.

SHOPPING?

BIGGER STORES HIRE US TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR SHOPLIFTERS, EMPLOYEE THEFT, THINGS LIKE THAT. WE HAVE ONE CLIENT SPECIFICALLY LOOKING FOR MORE NEGROES TO WORK AS UNDERCOVER SHOPPERS.



UNDERCOVER NEGRO SHOPPERS.

WHAT WILL THEY *THINK* OF NEXT?

The boxing ring didn't work as *planned*. Neither did college, or the career as a lawyer that was gonna make me rich.



WELCOME TO THE TEAM, JOHN. WE'LL GET ALL THE NECESSARY PAPERWORK STARTED, AND HAVE YOU ON THE JOB IN NO TIME.

RIGHT ON.

And just like that, I was a *private dick*.



Two weeks as an undercover shopper, and I was the *best* thing they'd ever seen.



Could spot a booster from a mile away.



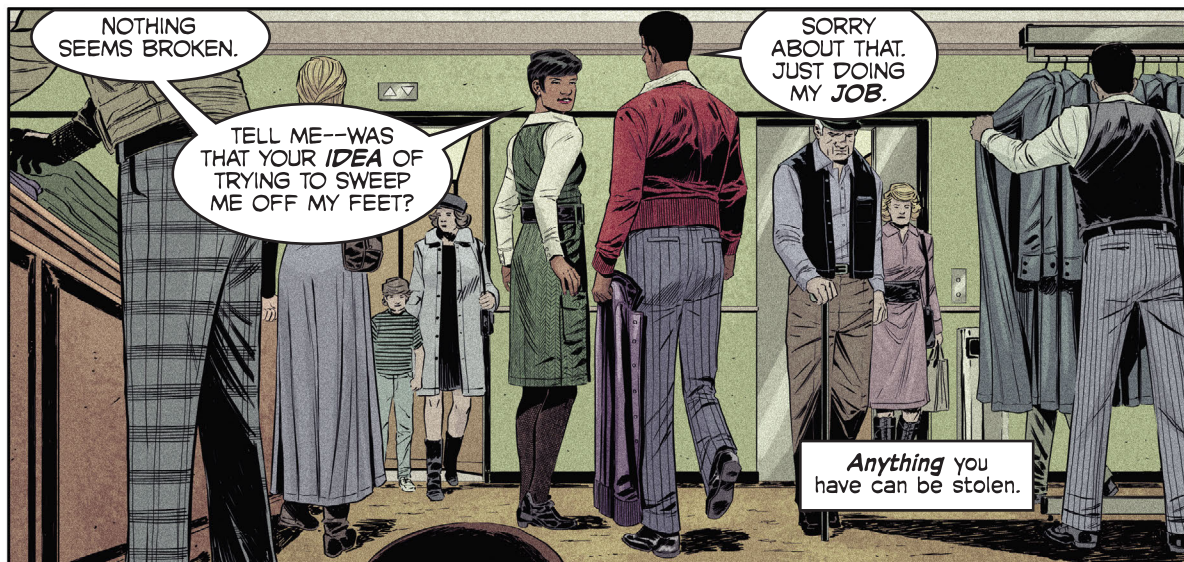
That's 'cause I used to be a booster.



And a good thief can *recognize* another thief.



At least that's what I *thought* until I met her.



NOTHING SEEMS BROKEN.

TELL ME--WAS THAT YOUR *IDEA* OF TRYING TO SWEEP ME OFF MY FEET?

SORRY ABOUT THAT. JUST DOING MY *JOB*.

Anything you have can be stolen.



I KNOW. I'VE SEEN YOU AROUND. I WORK IN COSMETICS. ARLETHA HAVENS.

JOHN SHAFT.

It's why you've got to *protect* the things that are most important.

WELL, MR. JOHN SHAFT, IT'S A *PLEASURE* TO MEET YOU.

THE PLEASURE IS ALL *MINE*.

And the best thieves...



THAT *REMAINS* TO BE SEEN.

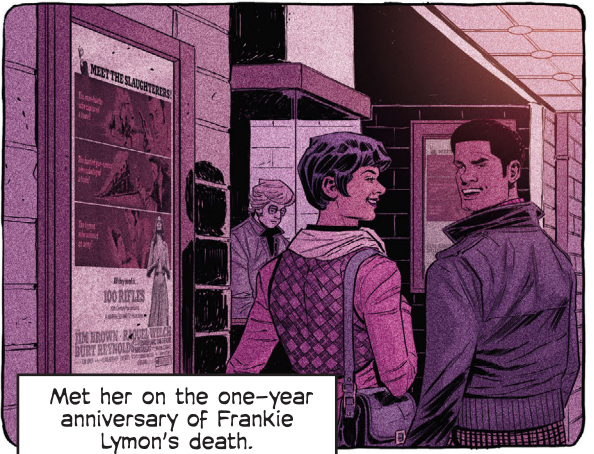
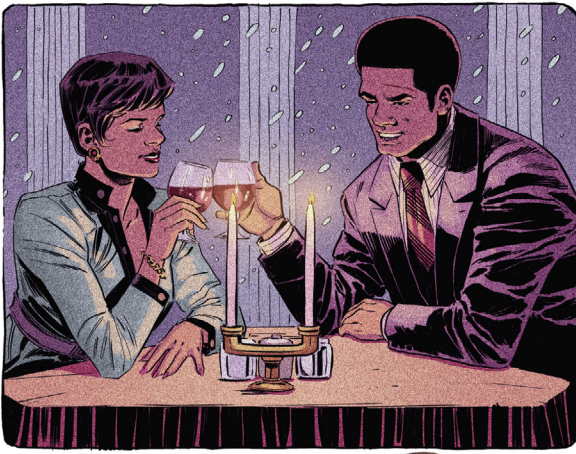
I'M OFF AT SEVEN. YOU CAN TAKE ME OUT FOR *DINNER* TO MAKE UP FOR KNOCKING ME DOWN.

...they don't even *steal* what you have...



SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.

...you give it to them of your own *free will*.



Met her on the one-year anniversary of Frankie Lymon's death.



'Why does my heart skip this crazy beat?'



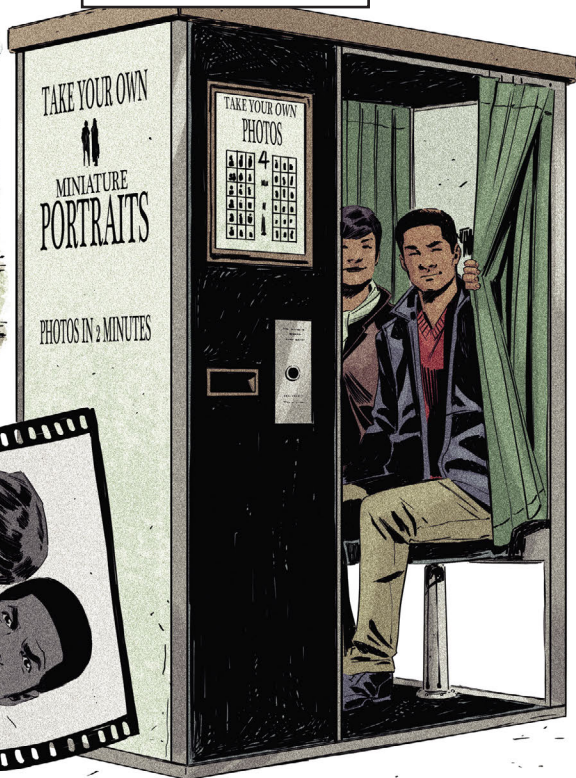
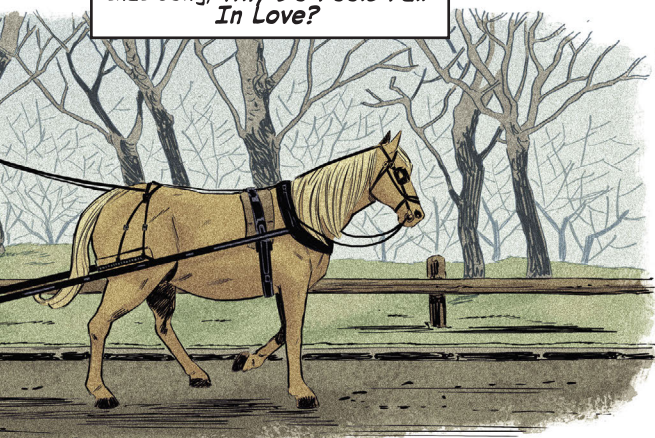
'For I know, it will reach defeat.'



Knew Frankie from around the way, before he got famous for that song, *Why Do Fools Fall In Love?*



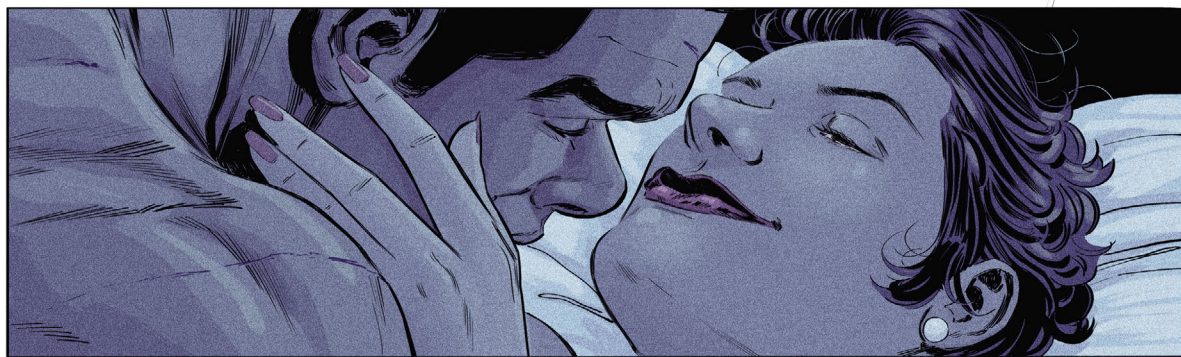
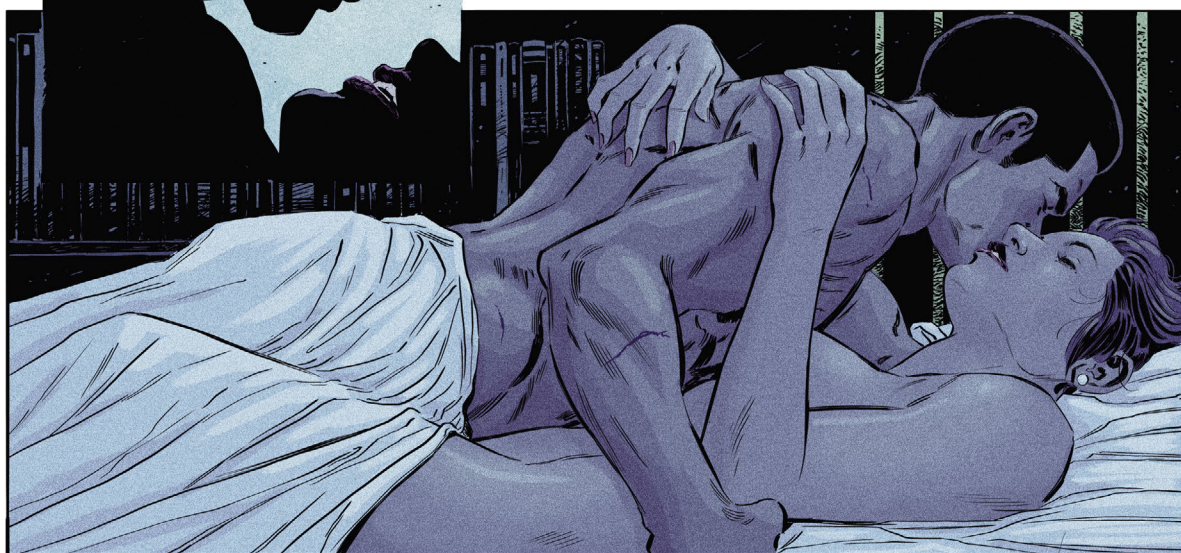
Thought about him and that song a lot during those weeks with her.

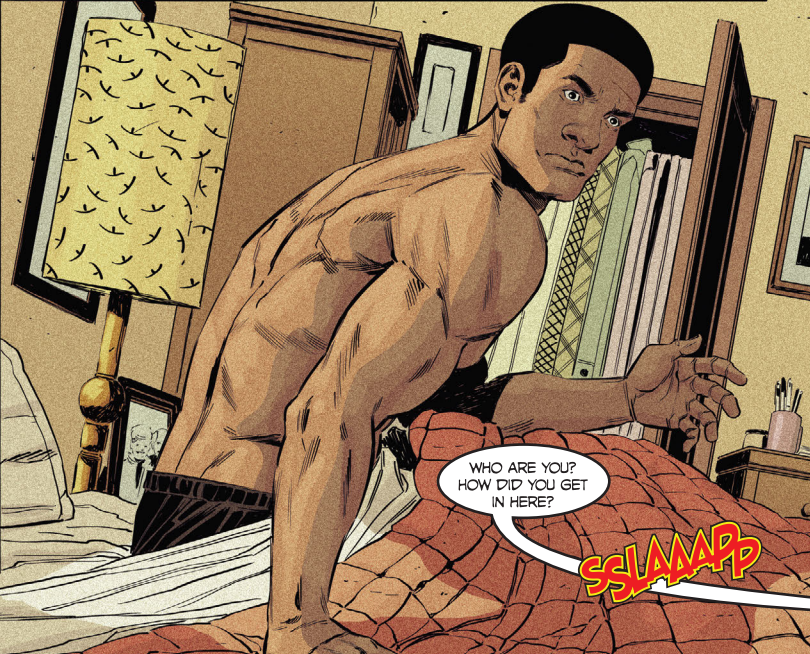
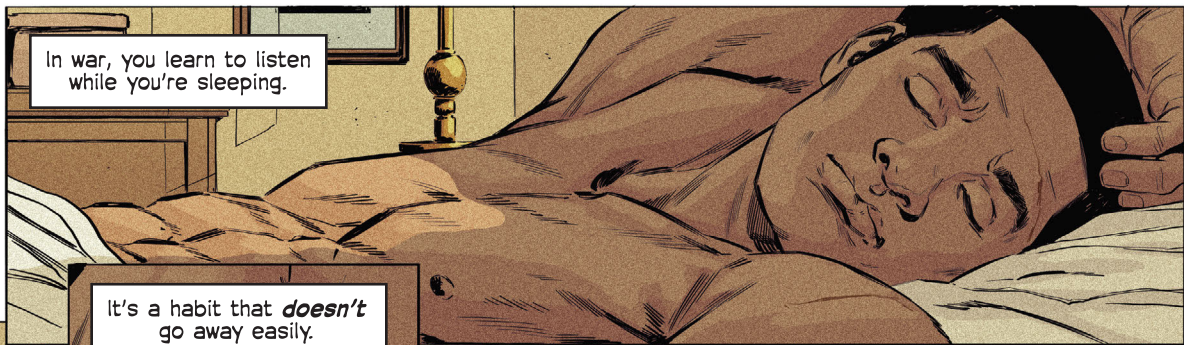


'Tell me why.'



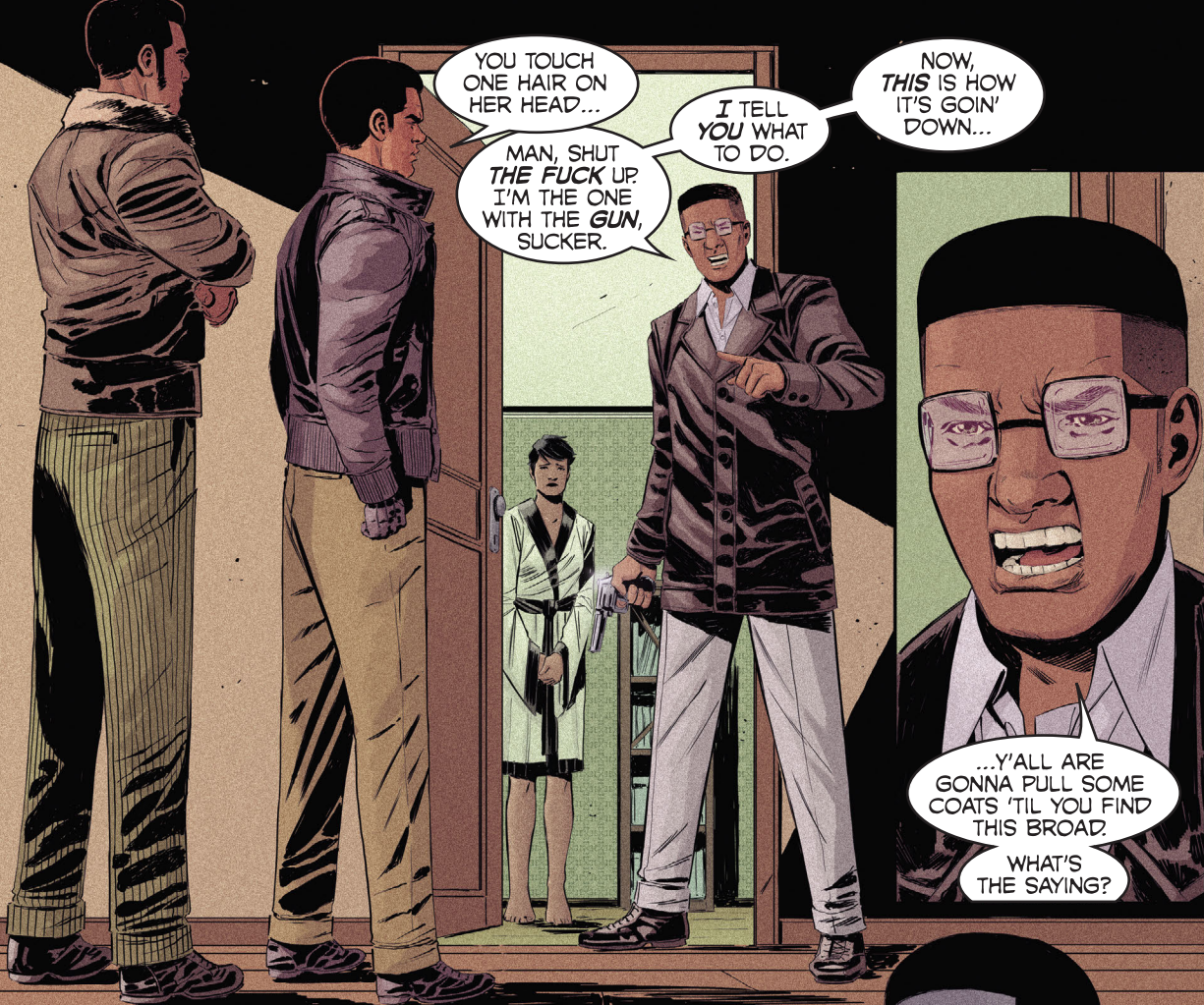
'Tell me why.'











YOU TOUCH
ONE HAIR ON
HER HEAD...

MAN, SHUT
THE FUCK UP.
I'M THE ONE
WITH THE GUN,
SUCKER.

I TELL
YOU WHAT
TO DO.

NOW,
THIS IS HOW
IT'S GOIN'
DOWN...

...Y'ALL ARE
GONNA PULL SOME
COATS 'TIL YOU FIND
THIS BROAD.

WHAT'S
THE SAYING?



"DON'T LEAVE NO
MOTHERFUCKIN'
STONE *UNTURNUED*."

SAY, MAN,
WHAT THE FUCK
AM I DOING DRIVIN'
YOUR CAR?



GOTTA KEEP AN EYE
ON YO' ASS. AIN'T 'BOUT
TO LET OLD JOHNNY
SHAFT CLEAN MY
CLOCK A SECOND
TIME.

THAT'S RIGHT, CHUMP,
I *KNOW* WHO YOU ARE.
SURPRISED TO SEE YO'
ASS IN ONE PIECE.

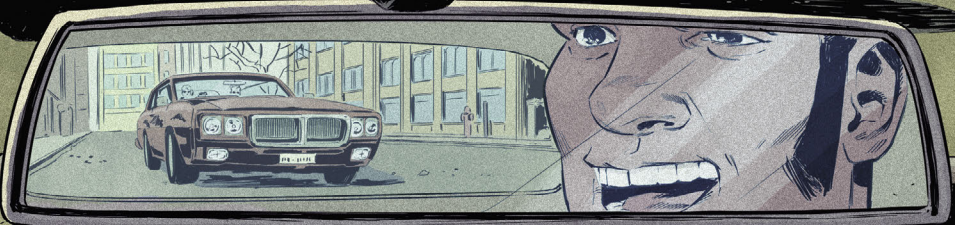
He talks too much.



I don't say a word.
Instead, I pay attention.

I pay attention
to *everything*.

I HEAR TELL
BAMMA BROOKS
BUSTED YOU UP REAL
GOOD, AFTER YOU DIDN'T
THROW THAT FIGHT FOR
JUNIOUS TATE.



Like the car *following* us
since we left The Village.

Like the fact that we're headed into the
last place on Earth I want to go--Harlem.

Would rather be back in 'Nam.

And the fact that they're
following us this close
says a lot.

110 ST

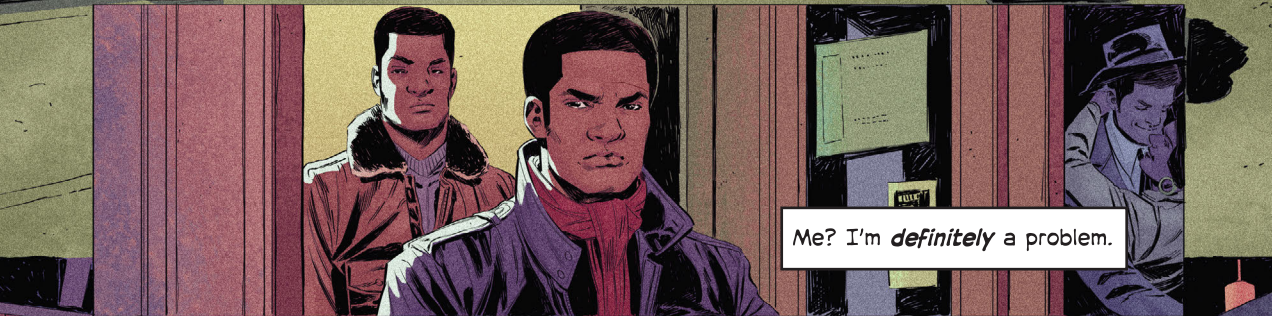


First, they don't
care if we know.

Second, if they don't care
that we know, they don't
think we're a *problem*.



Specifically, they don't think my *friend* is a problem. Maybe he is. Maybe he ain't.



Me? I'm *definitely* a problem.



And it wouldn't be long before word got out that *the problem* had come home, and he was looking for *trouble*.



Not long at all.

WELL, I'LL
BE...JOHNNY SHAFT.
LOOKS LIKE YOU DONE
HEALED FROM THE HURTIN'
BAMMA BROOKS PUT
ON YOU.

YEAH, MAN,
WHAT CAN I SAY?
GOOD TO SEE YOU
TOO, CHUCKIE



CHECK
IT OUT.

LOOKIN' FOR
MARISOL DUPREE.
WORD HAS IT SHE
USED TO DANCE
HERE.



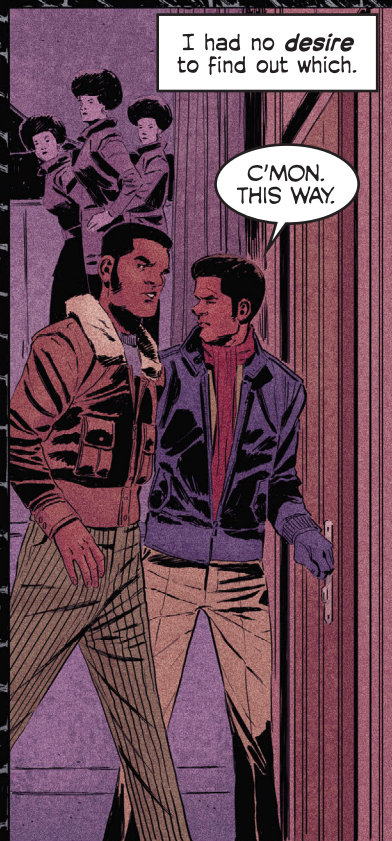
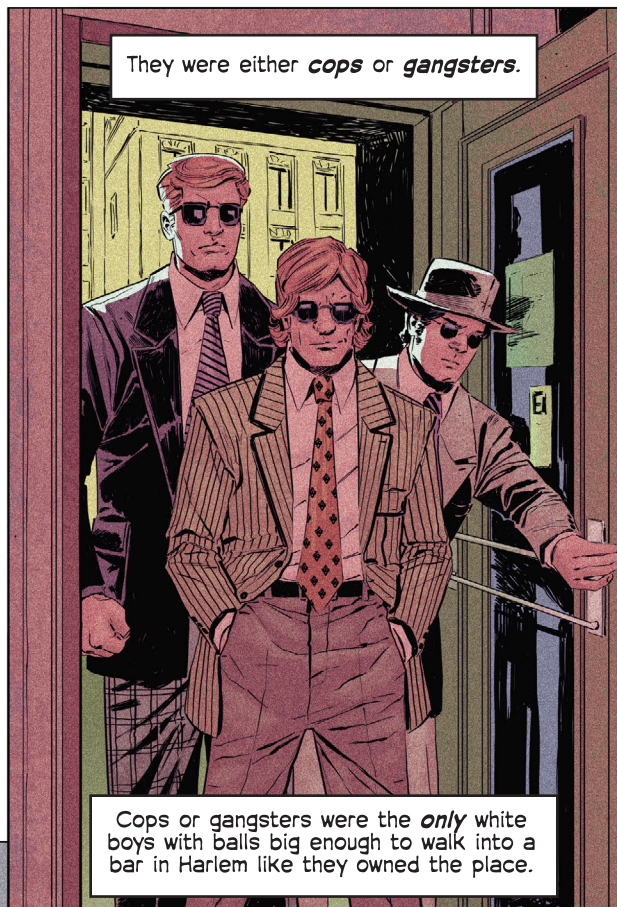
LOTTA FOLKS BEEN
LOOKIN' FOR MARISOL
LAST FEW DAYS.

SHE STOPPED
COMIN' 'ROUND
A WHILE BACK.
HEARD SHE WAS
HUSTLIN' FOR SOME
SMALL-TIME MACK
NAME OF JIMMY
STYLE.



MIND IF
WE ASK
AROUND?

KNOCK
YOURSELF
OUT.



Can't really *describe* what happened, but it was like someone had turned on a light switch.

No. That's *not* right.

It wasn't like someone turned on a light switch. Not at all.

It was like someone unlocked a cage and let the animal out.

Hadn't felt that way since I was in 'Nam.

Concrete and skyscrapers had replaced rice paddies and jungles, but the *feeling*... that was the same. *Exactly* the same.

Life and death.

Live or die.

It'd been two years since I last held a gun.





Two years since
I'd been in combat.



Two years since
I'd felt this *clear*
about anything.



Two years since
I did what I'd done
so *well*, for so *long*,
to so *many*.

It all comes back *easy*.

Really fuckin' easy.



If I'd thought
about it, *maybe* it
would've scared me.



Good thing I didn't
think about it.



Had no *idea* what
I'd woken up to
that morning.



No idea what
I was up against.



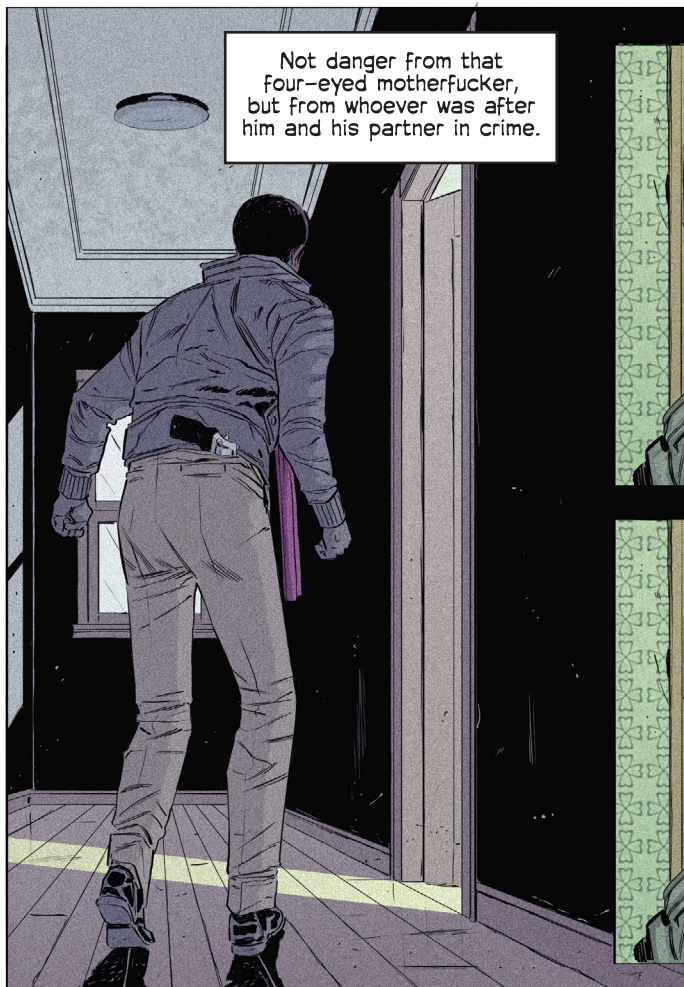
Only thing I knew
was that I'd left five
dead bodies in an alley.



And that was enough
to let me know that
this was more *serious*
than I'd realized.



And that let me
know she was in
danger.



Not danger from that four-eyed motherfucker, but from whoever was after him and his partner in crime.



Could tell you the *exact* number Vietcong I killed in the war.

But saying the number makes it too *real*.

And it's already real enough.



Tried not to think about how their families felt. Never wondered about the pain and loss *endured* by all those people.

Can't think about shit like that when you're at war.

Pretty sure that *whoever* killed her didn't think about how her death would make someone feel.

Didn't think how it would make *me* feel.

It's gonna be the same way when I find whoever did this.

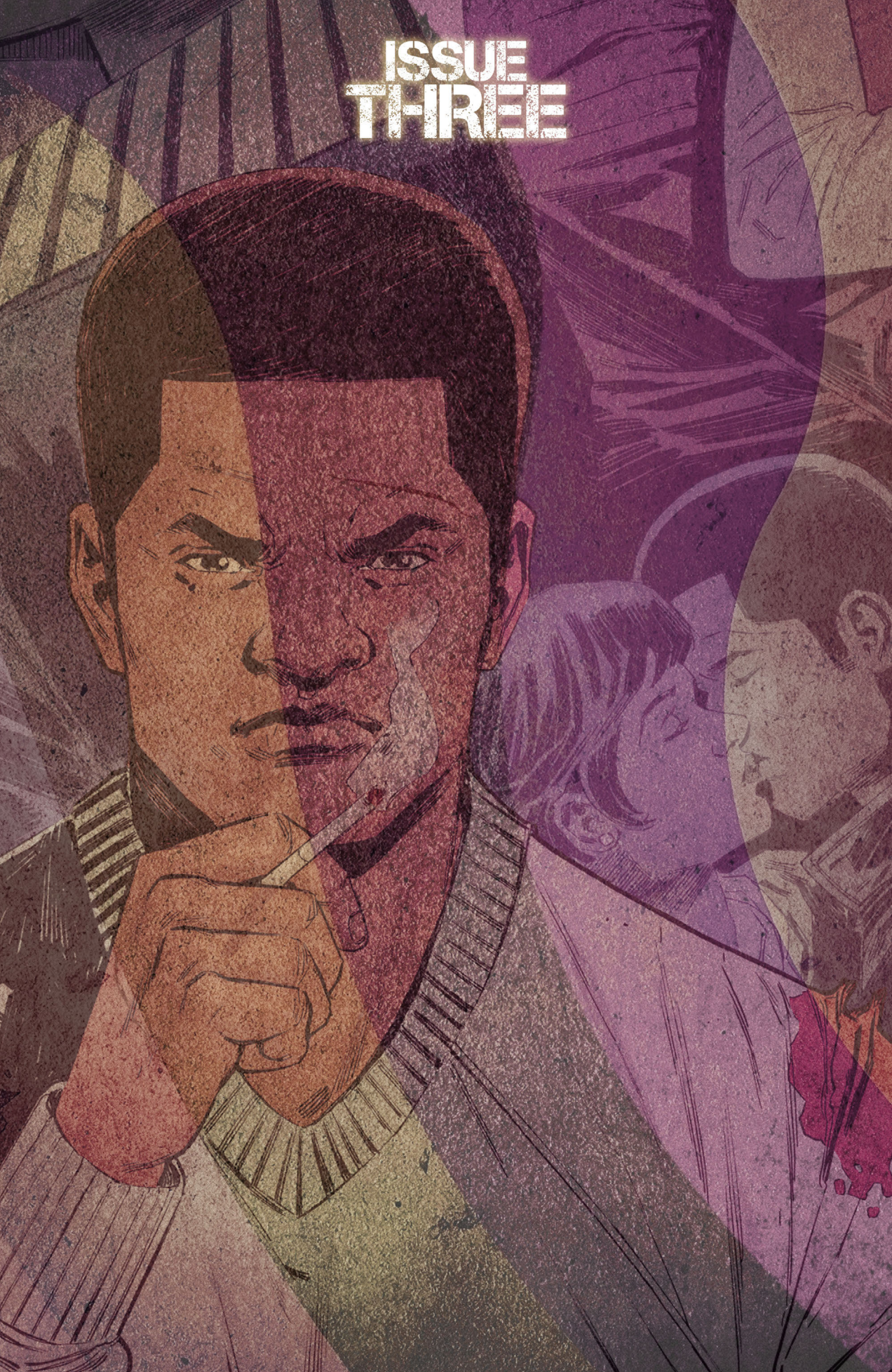
I won't think of their family and friends.

Not a single fuckin' thought wasted on anyone who might love them.

It makes the killing that much *easier*.



ISSUE THREE





ISSUE THREE MAIN COVER BY
DENYS COWAN AND **BILL SIENKIEWICZ**
COLORS BY **IVAN NUNES**

"SO, IS THE KID A **SUSPECT**, OR ARE YOU JUST FUCKIN' WITH HIM?"

"HE'S NOT A KID, BUTCH. YOU'VE SEEN HIS MILITARY RECORD. HE'S A **KILLER**."

"LET'S NOT START THROWIN' STONES, VIC..."

...HOW MANY **CONFIRMED KILLS** DO WE HAVE BETWEEN THE TWO OF US?

I DON'T GIVE A SHIT HOW MANY VIETCONG HE'S POPPED.

WE **FOUND** HIM IN AN APARTMENT WITH TWO DEAD BODIES.

ONE OF THE STIFFS IS CONNECTED TO **FIVE** OTHER BODIES UP IN HARLEM, AND **FOUR** OF THEM ARE PART OF SAL VENNERI'S CREW.

AND YOU HAVEN'T SEEN HIS JUVENILE RECORD, BUTCH. **HOLY FUCKIN' SHIT.**

"THIS GUY SHAFT, HE'S A **BAD FIGLIO DI PUTTANA.**"

"VIC, WHAT WOULD MAMA ANDEROSZI SAY IF SHE HEARD YOU TALKIN' LIKE THAT?"

WE'VE GOT SEVEN BODIES. FOUND **YOU** WITH TWO OF 'EM.

WE'VE GOT **WITNESSES** THAT SAW YOU WITH ONE OF 'EM JUST BEFORE HE TOOK THE DEEP-SIX PLUNGE.

AND WE **KNOW** YOU WERE BANGIN' THE BROAD.

SO, TELL US **SOMETHING.**



HER NAME WAS ARLETHA. ARLETHA HAVENS. SHOW SOME RESPECT.

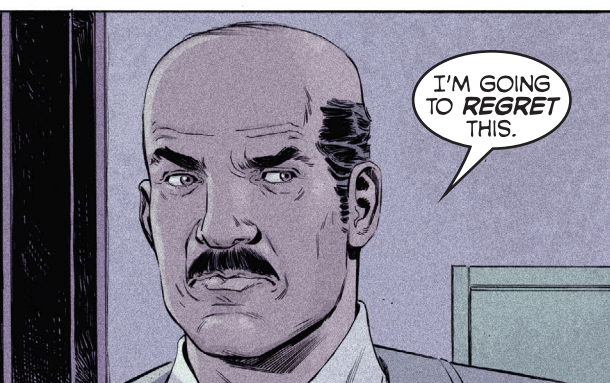
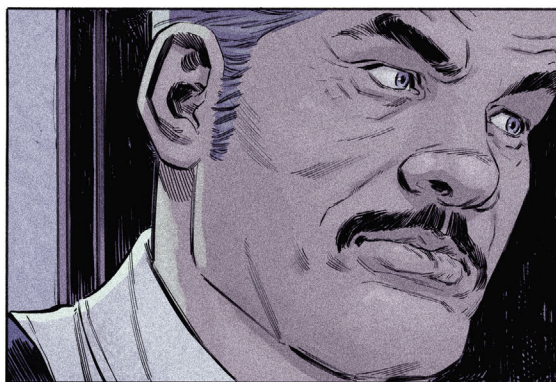
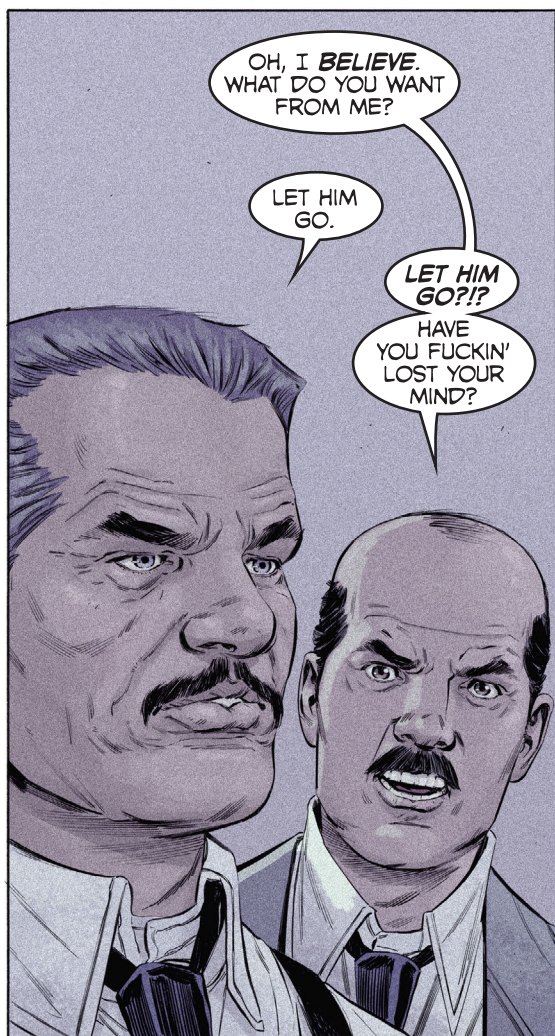


TELL ME YOU DON'T SEE THAT. HE'S A TICKING TIME BOMB.

I *SEE* IT. BUT I'LL TELL YOU THIS--HE'S BEEN WORKIN' FOR ME A LITTLE OVER TWO MONTHS, AND HE'S PROBABLY THE *BEST* I'VE EVER SEEN.



"INSTINCTS LIKE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE."

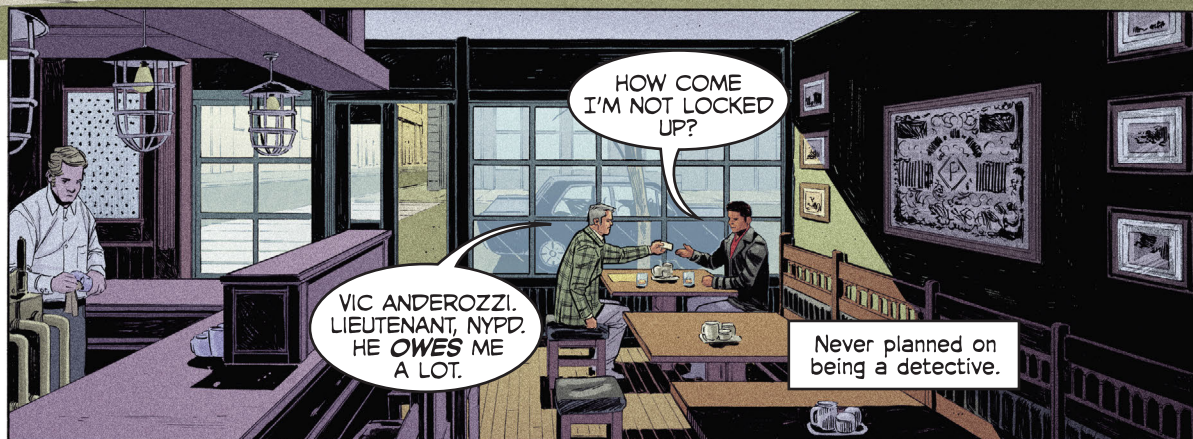




"YOU WANT TO TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED, JOHN?"

"YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU?"

"NO. NOT REALLY."



HOW COME I'M NOT LOCKED UP?

VIC ANDEROZZI. LIEUTENANT, NYPD. HE OWES ME A LOT.

Never planned on being a detective.



ANDEROZZI. SERVED WITH A MARIO ANDEROZZI. HE WAS FROM QUEENS. **GOOD GUY.**

STEPPED ON A LANDMINE. WASN'T ENOUGH OF HIM LEFT TO SHIP HOME.

Never planned on much of anything, other than staying **alive.**

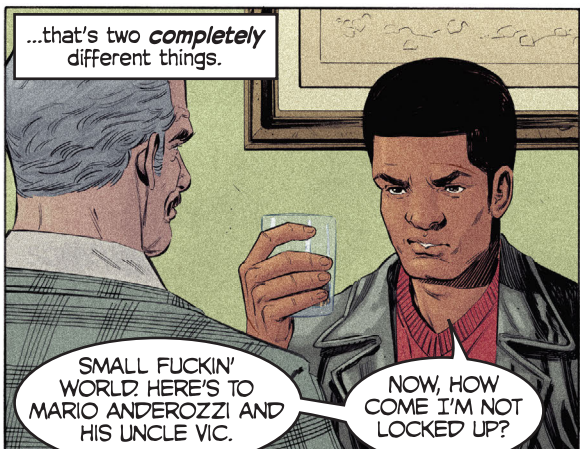


HOLY SHIT.

MARIO WAS VIC'S NEPHEW.

What you've got planned...

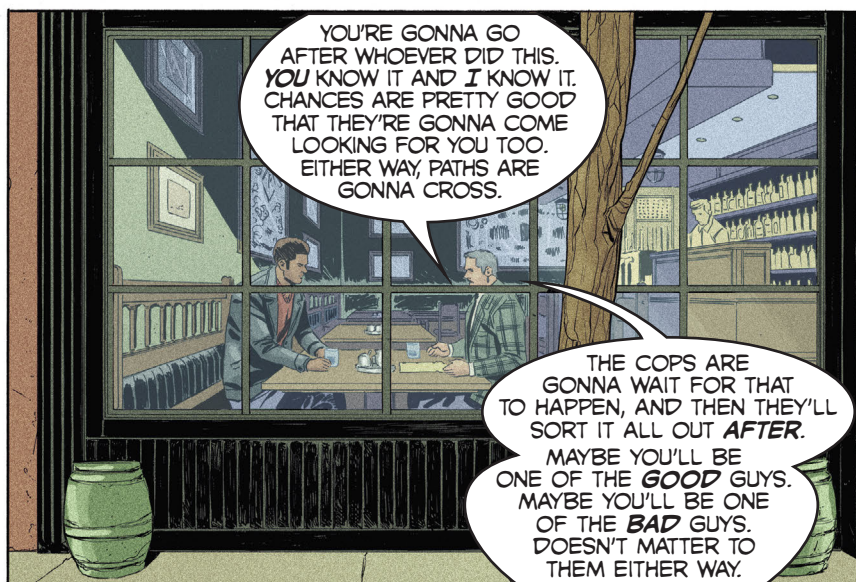
...and what life's got planned for you...



...that's two **completely** different things.

SMALL FUCKIN' WORLD. HERE'S TO MARIO ANDEROZZI AND HIS UNCLE VIC.

NOW, HOW COME I'M NOT LOCKED UP?



Arlatha's middle name was Claudine.

All the things she told me, she never told me that.

Probable cause of death--blunt force trauma to the head.

No evidence of rape.

Skin found under her fingernails. Caucasian.

Means she likely put up a fight. Scratched one of 'em.

Can't believe I didn't know her middle name.



Can't believe I didn't tell her my middle name.



Wish I never met her.



Wish I didn't know she existed.



If I didn't know her, if she never existed...



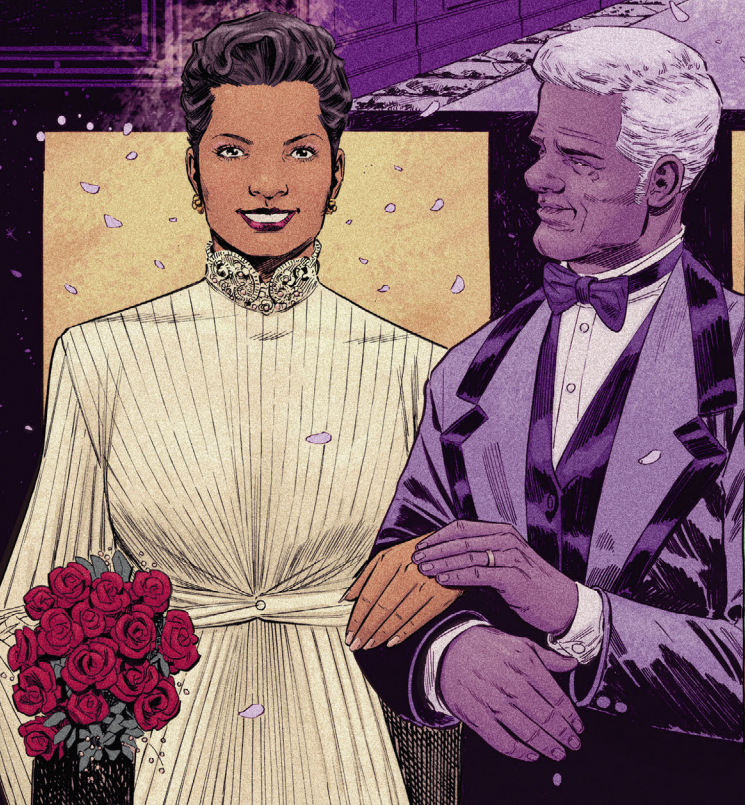
I wouldn't be feeling *anything*.

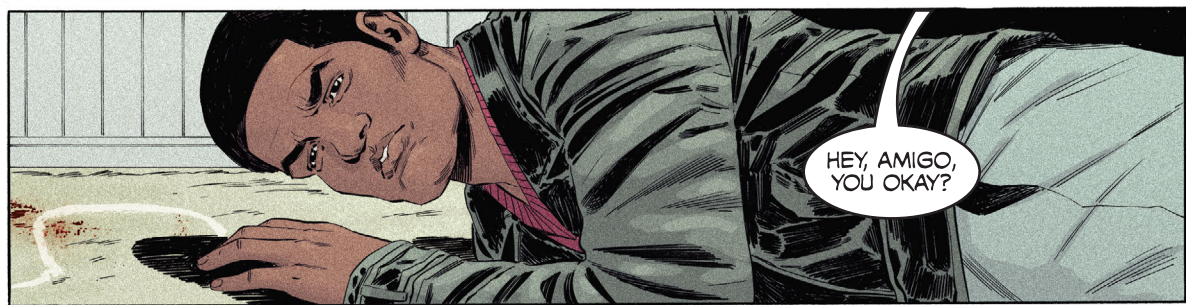
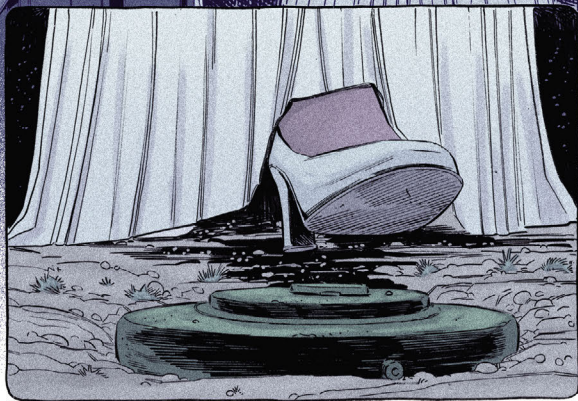


Nothing.

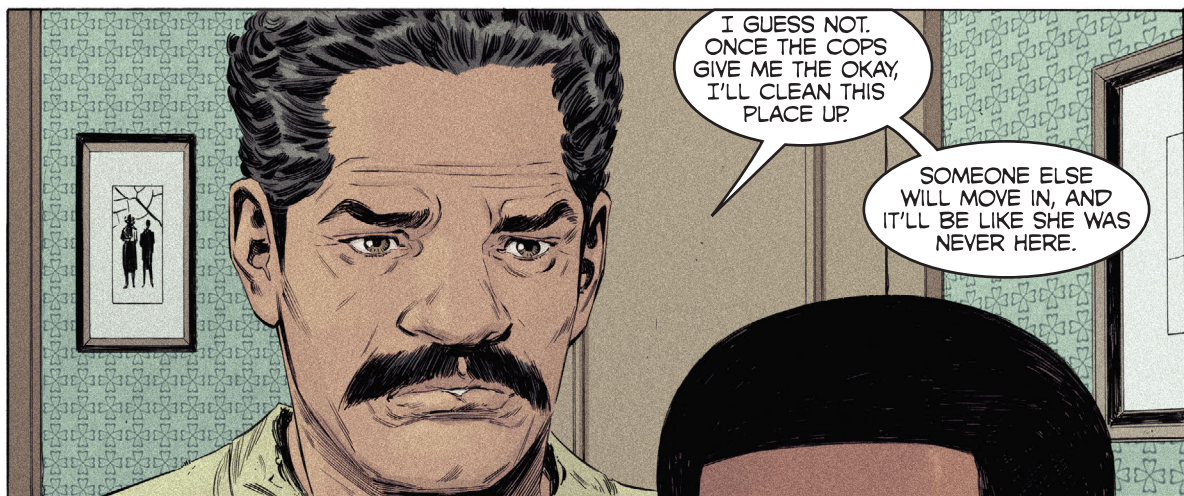
No thing.

...I wouldn't be feeling what I felt.









I GUESS NOT.
ONCE THE COPS
GIVE ME THE OKAY,
I'LL CLEAN THIS
PLACE UP.

SOMEONE ELSE
WILL MOVE IN, AND
IT'LL BE LIKE SHE WAS
NEVER HERE.



I'M
MOVING
IN.

AND I'LL
CLEAN UP THE
MESS.

OWNER'S
GOT A **PROBLEM**
WITH THAT, TELL 'EM
TO COME TALK TO ME.
THE NAME'S SHAFT.
JOHN SHAFT.



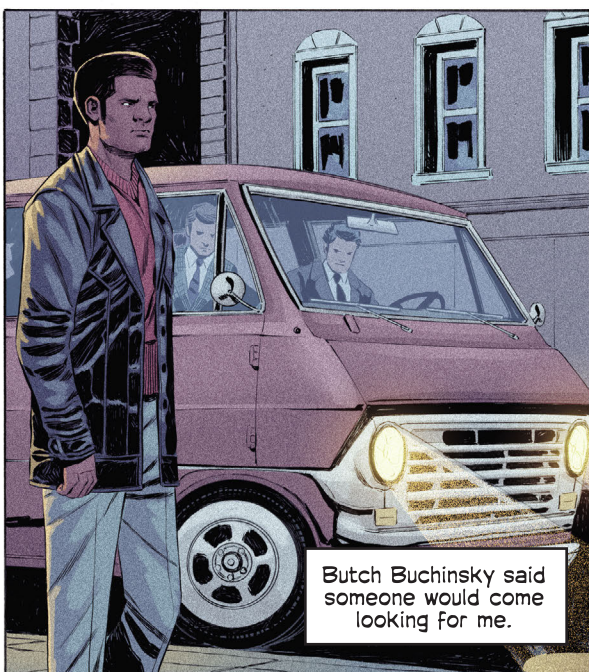
YOU GOT IT,
JOHN SHAFT.

RUDY
GOMEZ.

GRACIAS,
HERMANO.



THAT'S HIM.



Butch Buchinsky said
someone would come
looking for me.



I'd been *counting* on that.



I *let* them find me.



I let them *think*
they have me where
they want me.

I let them think
they're in *control*.



LOOK WHAT
WE HAVE HERE.
NEVER THOUGHT I'D
SEE YOU *AGAIN*.

I KNOW
YOU?



YOU LOST
ME A LOT OF
MONEY, A WHILE
BACK.



LEFT MY CHECKBOOK
IN MY OTHER COAT.
YOU TAKE AN
I.O.U.?



THE MOULINYAN'S
GOT JOKES.

FUCK YOU,
WOP.



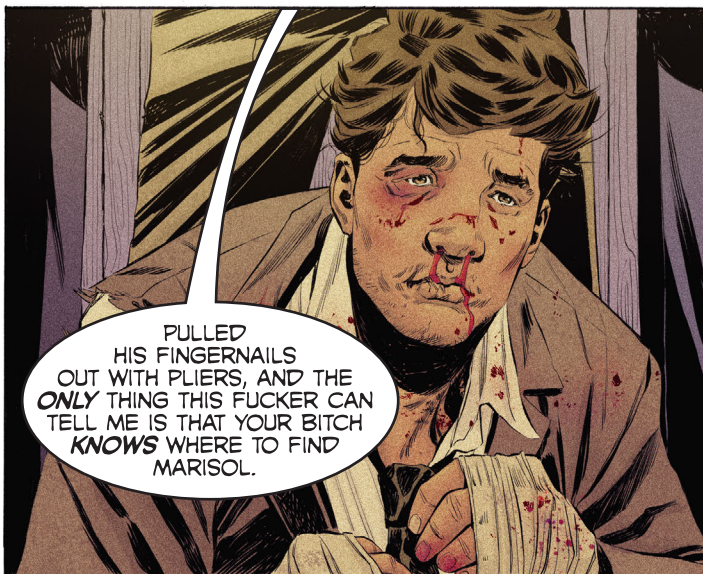


YOU MEAN
THIS JIMMY
STYLE?

I'VE BEEN
ASKIN' THIS ASSHOLE
FOR DAYS...



...AND HE
AIN'T SAID
A FUCKIN'
THING.



PULLED
HIS FINGERNAILS
OUT WITH PLIERS, AND THE
ONLY THING THIS FUCKER CAN
TELL ME IS THAT YOUR BITCH
KNOWS WHERE TO FIND
MARISOL.



AGAIN
WITH THE FUNNY.
YOU'RE A REGULAR
NIPSEY RUSSELL.

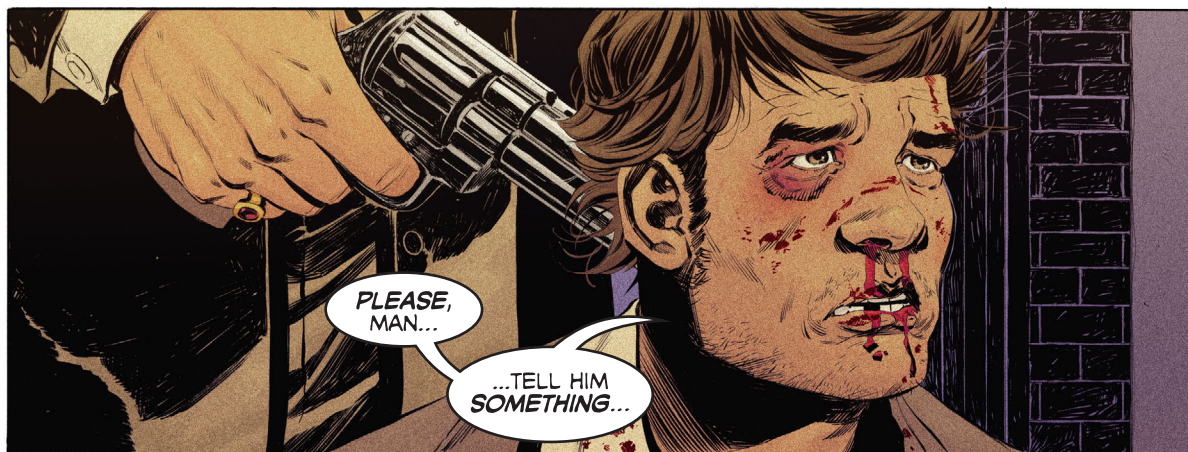
HOW
FUNNY IS
THIS?



PULLED HIS
FINGERNAILS OUT
WITH PLIERS?
HMMMM.

AM I
SUPPOSED TO
BE **IMPRESSED** OR
INTIMIDATED?





"WAY I SEE IT, YOU *OWE* ME MONEY FOR THAT FIGHT YOU DIDN'T THROW."



"YOU GET TO WORK OFF YOUR *DEBT*."



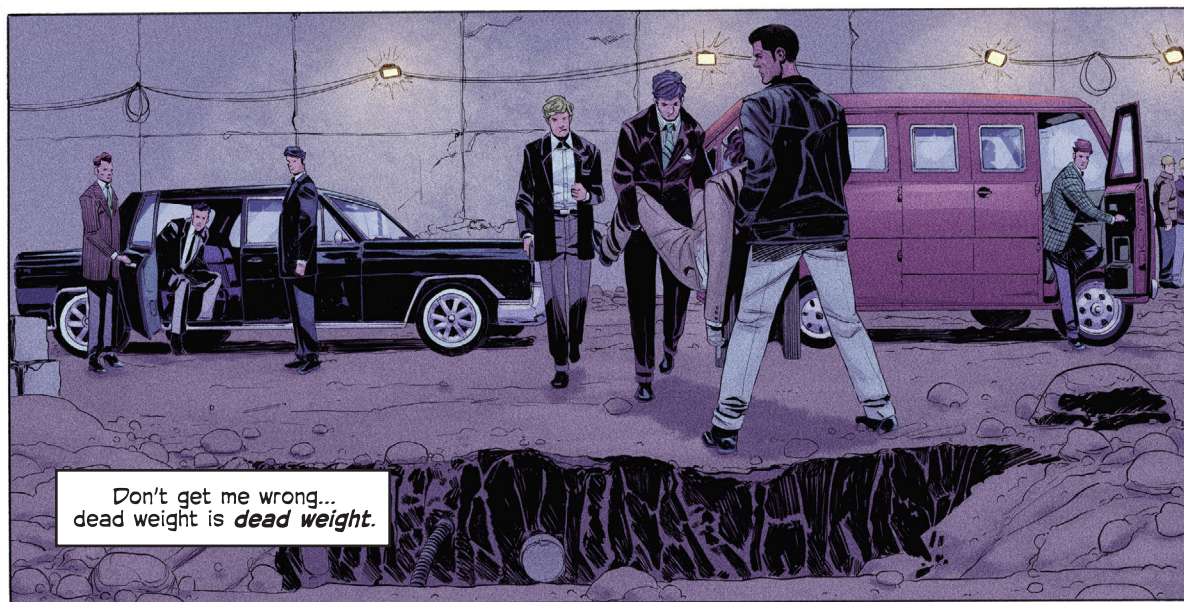
"THINK OF IT AS *BUYING* YOUR LIFE BACK."

"OR WE CAN BALANCE THE BOOKS RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW. YOUR *CHOICE*, FUNNY BOY."





Bodies don't seem
to weigh as much when
you don't know 'em.



Don't get me wrong...
dead weight is *dead weight*.



It's just that some
of it is *easier* to carry.



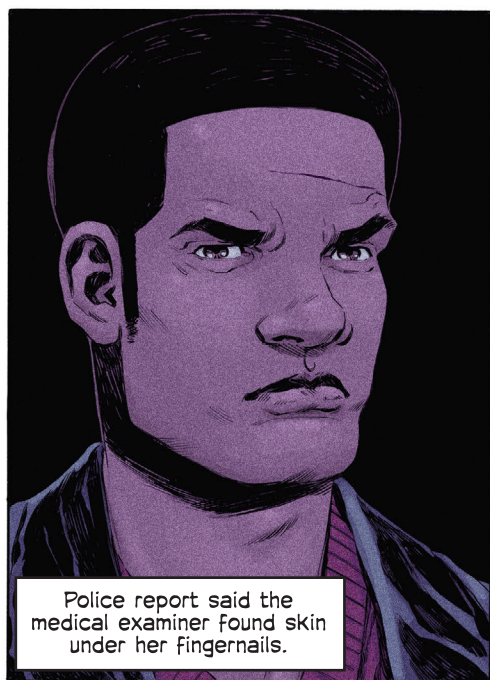
SEE, DOESN'T
THAT *FEEL*
GOOD...

...KNOWING THAT
YOU'RE MAKING GOOD
ON WHAT YOU
OWE ME?



NOW YOU **FIND** MARISOL DUPREE FOR ME, AND YOU'RE PAID UP IN FULL.

IF YOU DON'T FIND HER, IT'S YOU WE BRING BACK HERE NEXT TIME.



Police report said the medical examiner found skin under her fingernails.

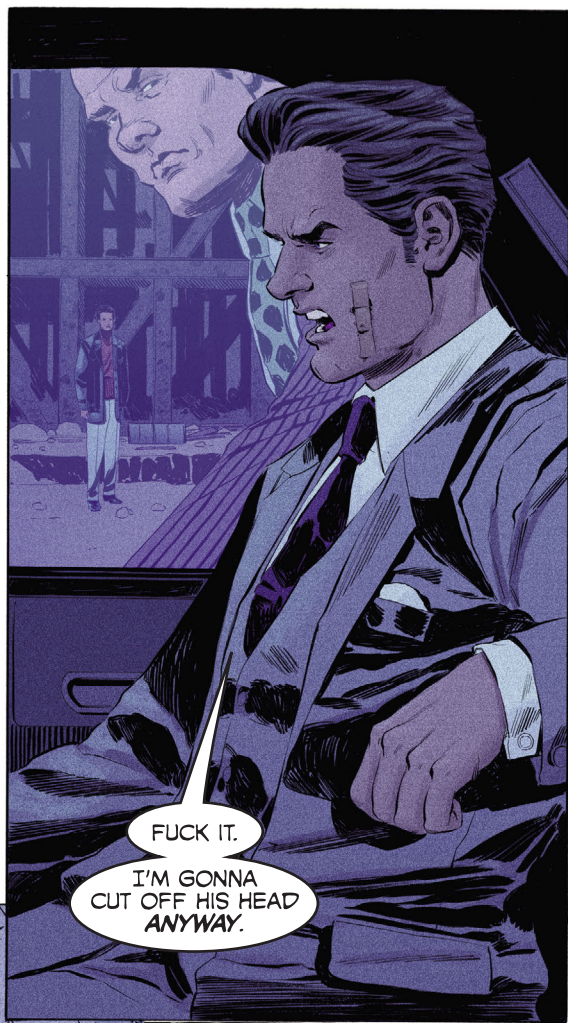


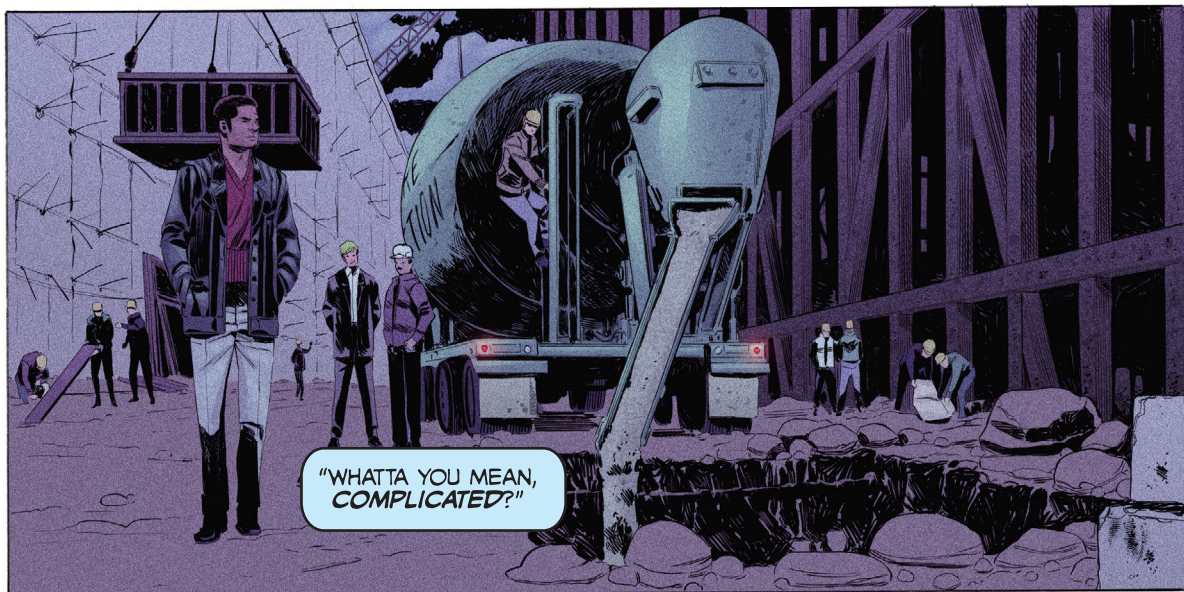
YOU GOT FORTY-EIGHT HOURS.

UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYIN' HERE?



YEAH.





"WHATTA YOU MEAN,
COMPLICATED?"



I MEAN
COMPLICATED.
BUT THAT'S OKAY.

I'M STARTING TO
UNDERSTAND YOU.

AND I *LIKE*
COMPLICATED.

LIKE?



"WHAT ARE YOU **GETTING**
AT, MR. SHAFT?"

"WHY DO I HAVE TO BE
GETTING AT **SOMETHING**,
MISS HAVENS?"



THIS IS WHAT I
MEAN BY COMPLICATED.
YOU KEEP IT ALL
INSIDE.

IT'S HARD TO
READ A BOOK THAT'S
NEVER OPEN.

SORRY IT'S SO
HARD TO READ ME.
LET ME MAKE IT AS
UNCOMPLICATED AS
POSSIBLE...

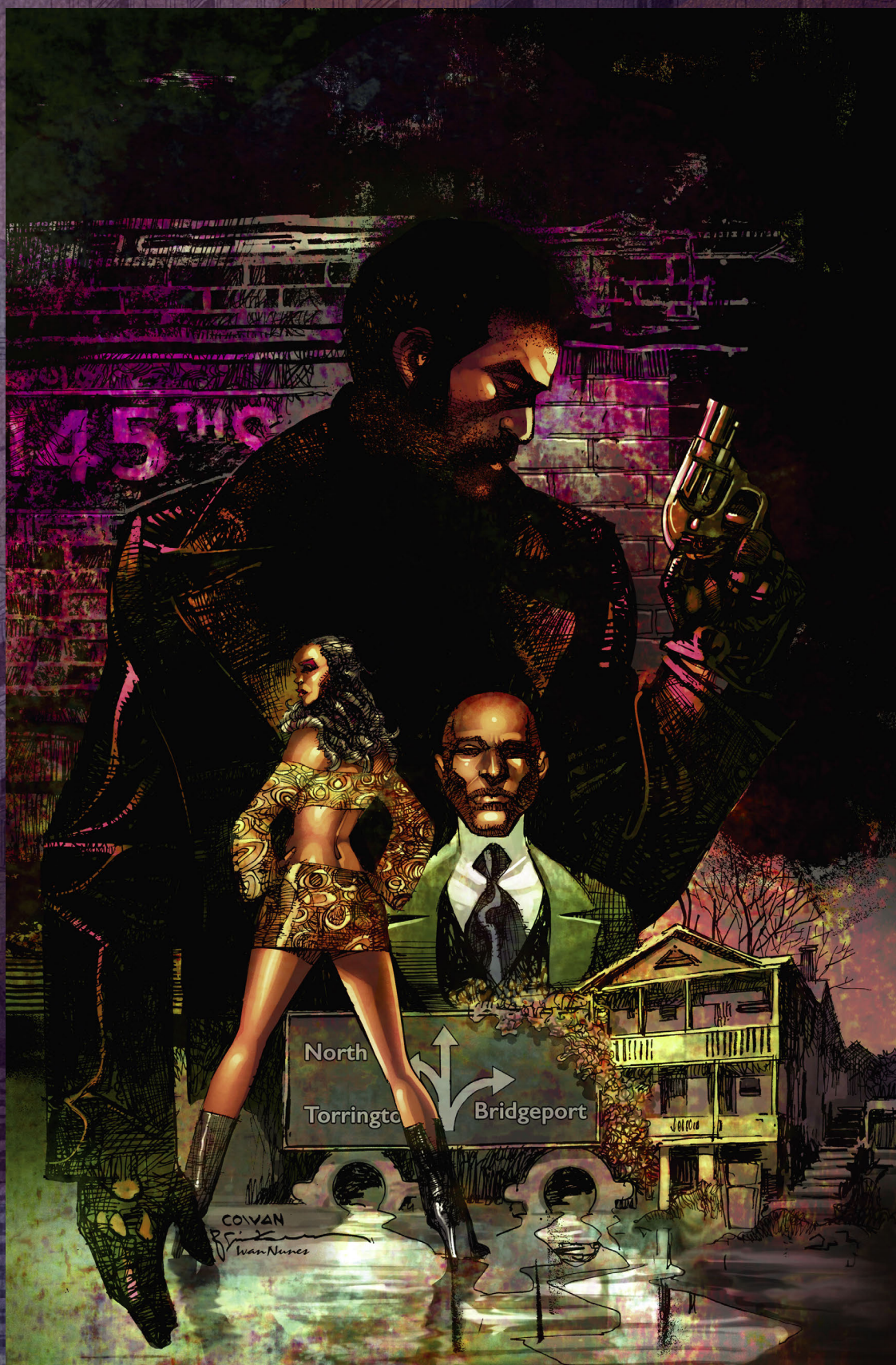
"...ARLETHA HAVENS,
I **LOVE** YOU."

er
it



ISSUE FOUR





ISSUE FOUR MAIN COVER BY
DENYS COWAN AND **BILL SIENKIEWICZ**
COLORS BY **IVAN NUNES**

Can't remember which foster home I was living in the first time I saw *The Wizard of Oz*. Just remember that I saw it on a black and white television.

APOLLO

ETTA JAMES

W/ SPECIAL GUESTS

THE JACKSON 5

I didn't know that Oz looked any *different* from Kansas. The yellow brick road, Emerald City—it was all the same shades of grey as the farm in Kansas.

Maybe that's why I never bought into that there's-no-place-like-home *bullshit*.



As a kid, I couldn't *understand* why anyone would want to return home. Maybe that's because my home was Harlem.



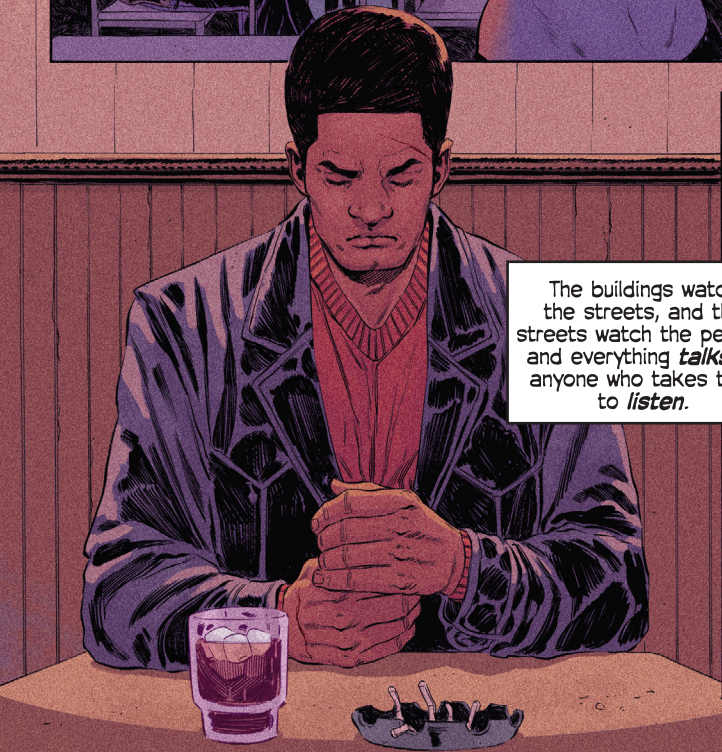
I'd rather be lost *anywhere* in the world, than know exactly where I was in Harlem.



People think it's easy to get lost in a city as big as New York.

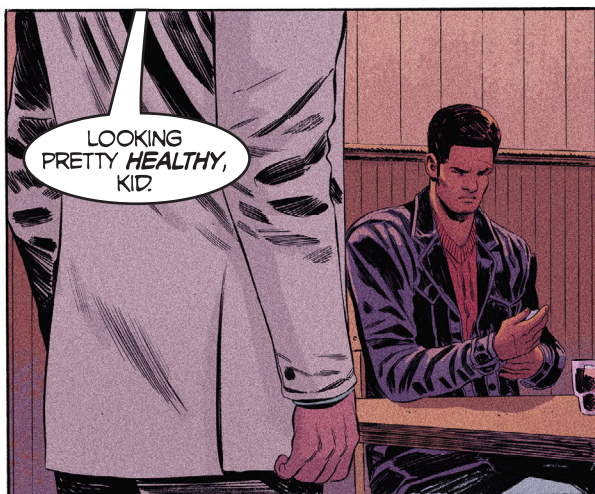


But the city is *alive*. It sees and it hears.



The buildings watch the streets, and the streets watch the people, and everything *talks* to anyone who takes time to *listen*.








WONDERED WHEN
SOMEONE WOULD
SHOW UP.

Bamma Brooks.
Boxer turned muscle for hire.
He's the guy you wanted to be
when you were a kid, until you
realized the truth. Then you
spend the rest of your life
worrying you realized it
too late.



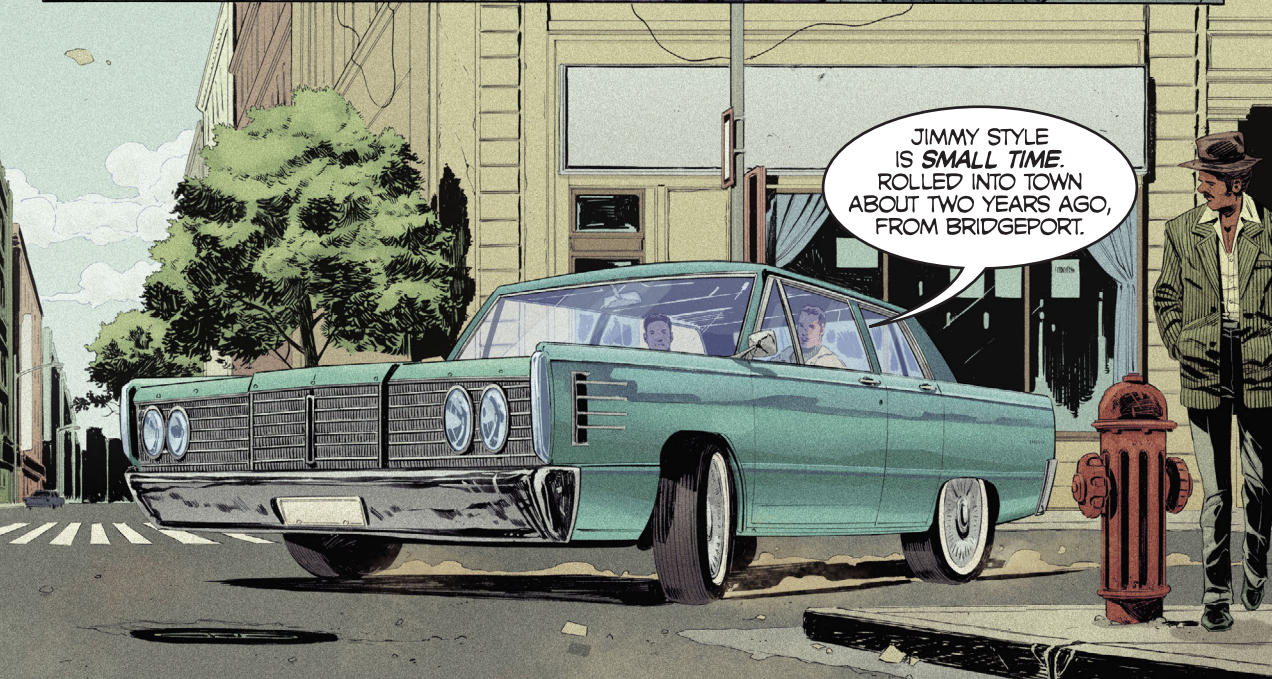
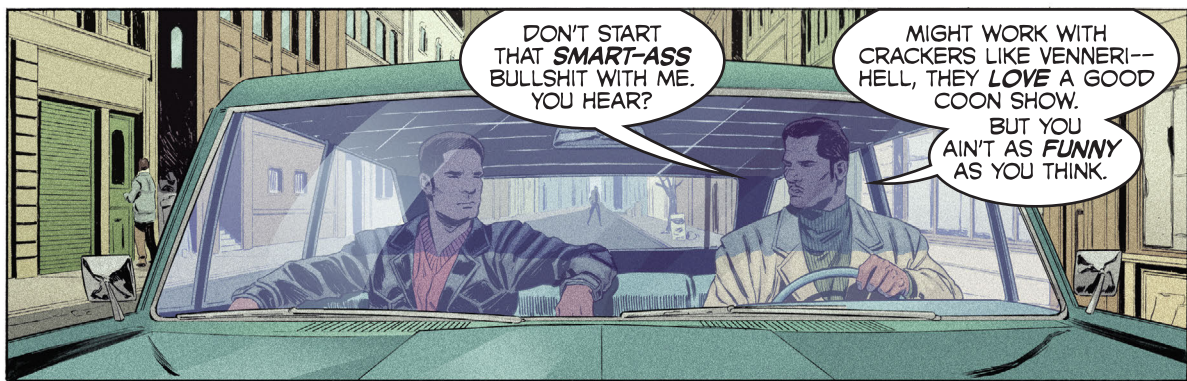
GOTTA ADMIT,
I DIDN'T EXPECT
TO SEE YOU.

THE MAN
WANTS TO SEE
YOU.



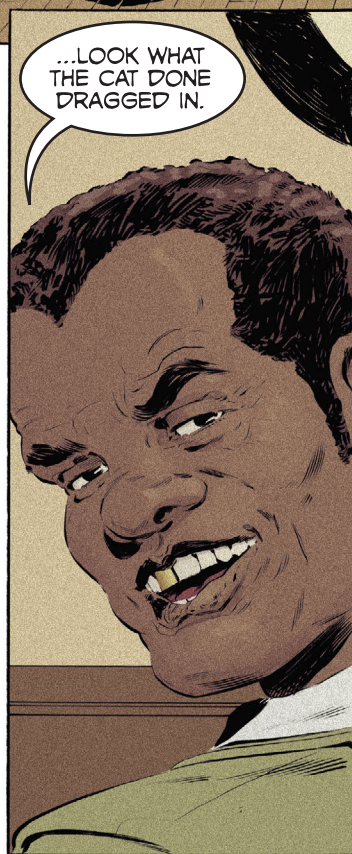
If Dorothy had been
from Harlem, with people
like Bamma Brooks waiting
for her to return, she'd
never have come home.

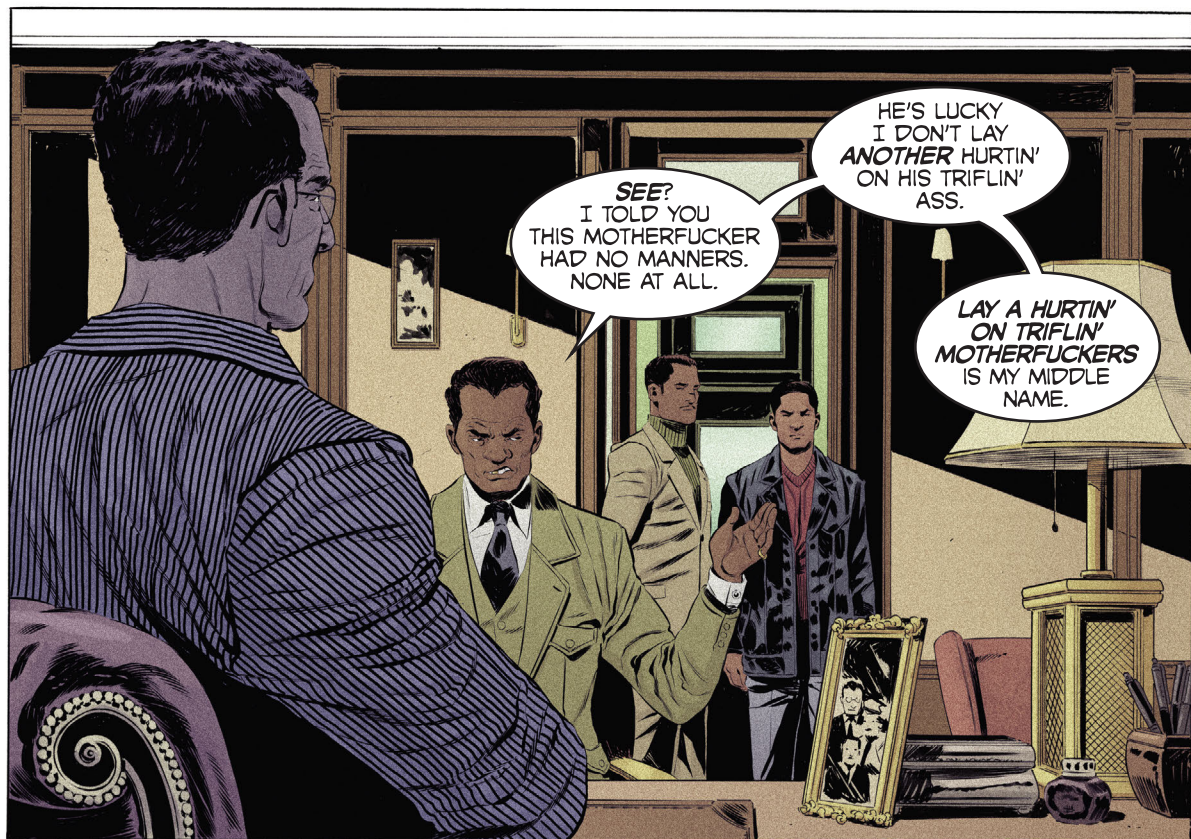












SEE?
I TOLD YOU
THIS MOTHERFUCKER
HAD NO MANNERS.
NONE AT ALL.

HE'S LUCKY
I DON'T LAY
ANOTHER HURTIN'
ON HIS TRIFLIN'
ASS.

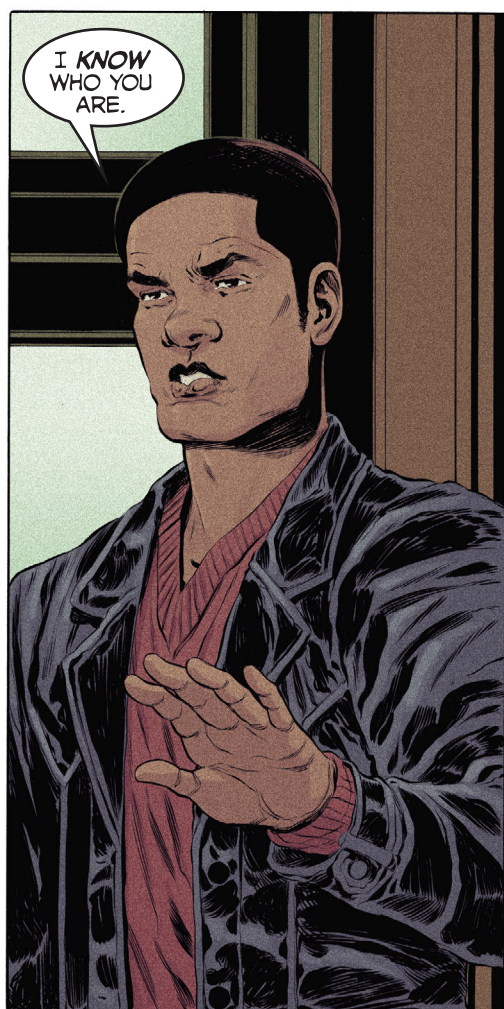
LAY A HURTIN'
ON TRIFLIN'
MOTHERFUCKERS
IS MY MIDDLE
NAME.



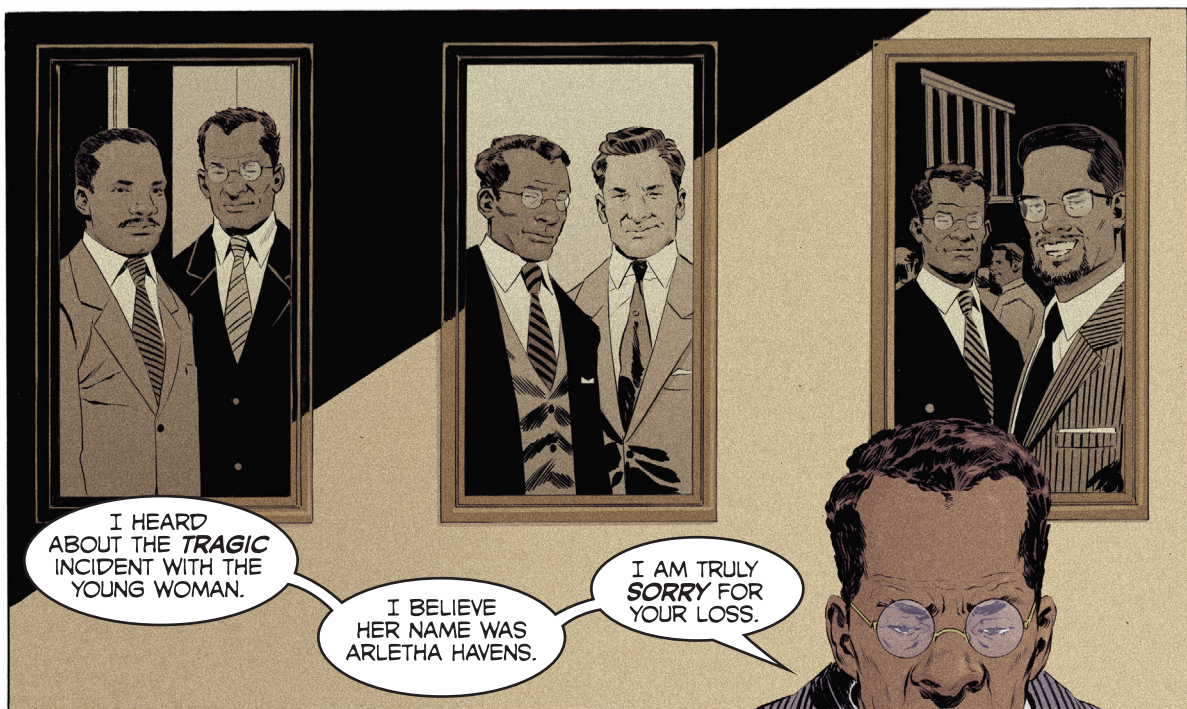
THAT'S
ENOUGH,
JUNIOUS.

PLEASE,
MR. SHAFT,
MAKE YOURSELF
COMFORTABLE.

MY
NAME
IS...



I **KNOW**
WHO YOU
ARE.



I HEARD ABOUT THE **TRAGIC** INCIDENT WITH THE YOUNG WOMAN.

I BELIEVE HER NAME WAS ARLETHA HAVENS.

I AM TRULY **SORRY** FOR YOUR LOSS.



AND I'M SORRY THAT YOU'RE NOW CAUGHT UP IN ALL OF THIS **UNFORTUNATE** BUSINESS WITH JIMMY STYLE.



EXACTLY WHAT **BUSINESS** IS THAT?

AND **SKIP** THE BULLSHIT.



THERE IS A **PACKAGE**--SOME DOCUMENTS, SOME PHOTOS, SOME THINGS THAT AREN'T MEANT TO BE SEEN BY THE PUBLIC.

JIMMY STYLE HAD COME INTO POSSESSION OF THE PACKAGE IN QUESTION.

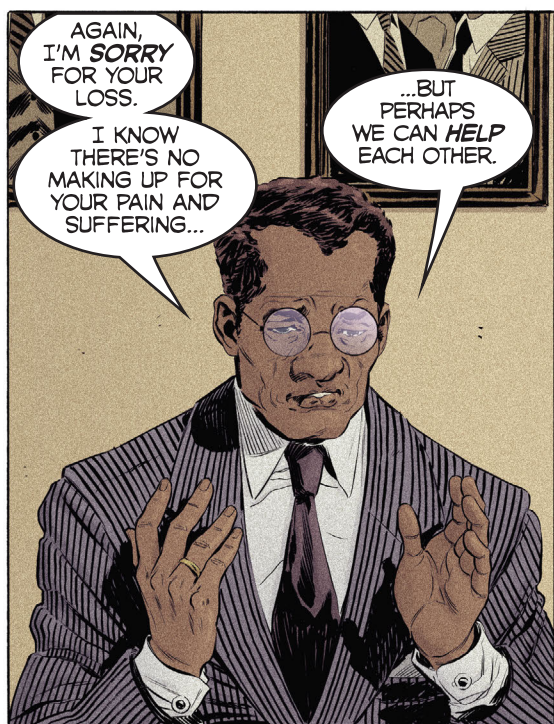


AND HE GAVE IT TO MARISOL DUPREE FOR SAFEKEEPING.

EXACTLY. AND NOW SHE'S **DISAPPEARED**.



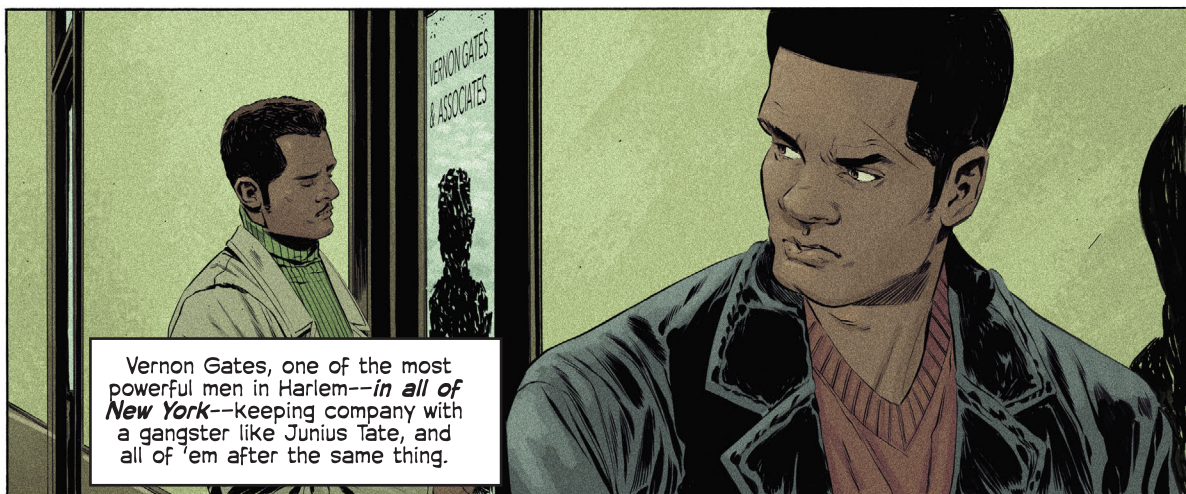
MUST BE ONE **HELLUVA** PACKAGE, NUMBER OF PEOPLE THAT HAVE DIED OVER IT.



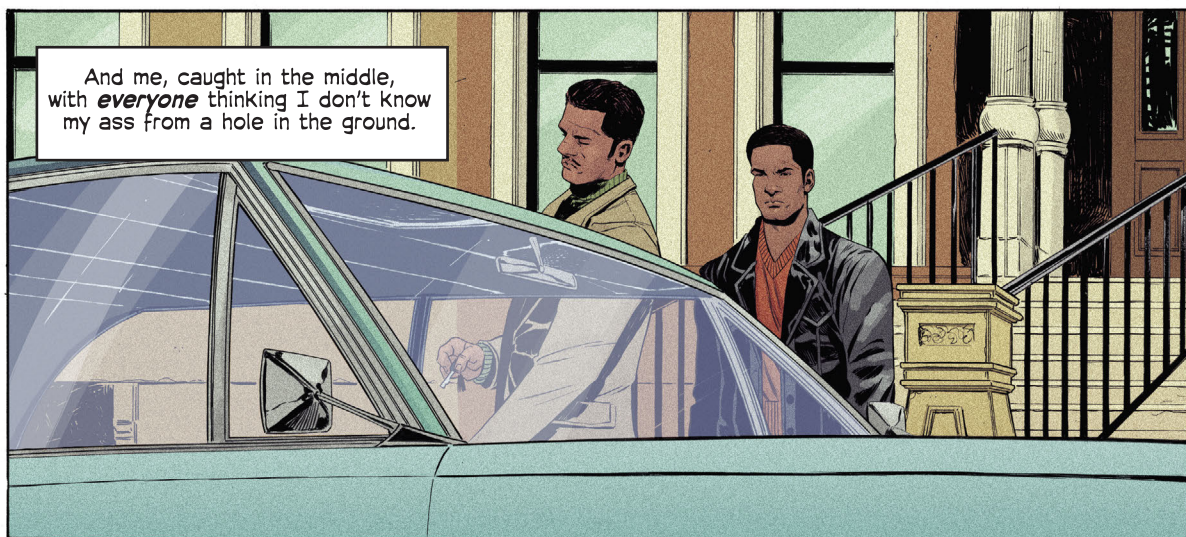
AGAIN, I'M **SORRY** FOR YOUR LOSS.

I KNOW THERE'S NO MAKING UP FOR YOUR PAIN AND SUFFERING...

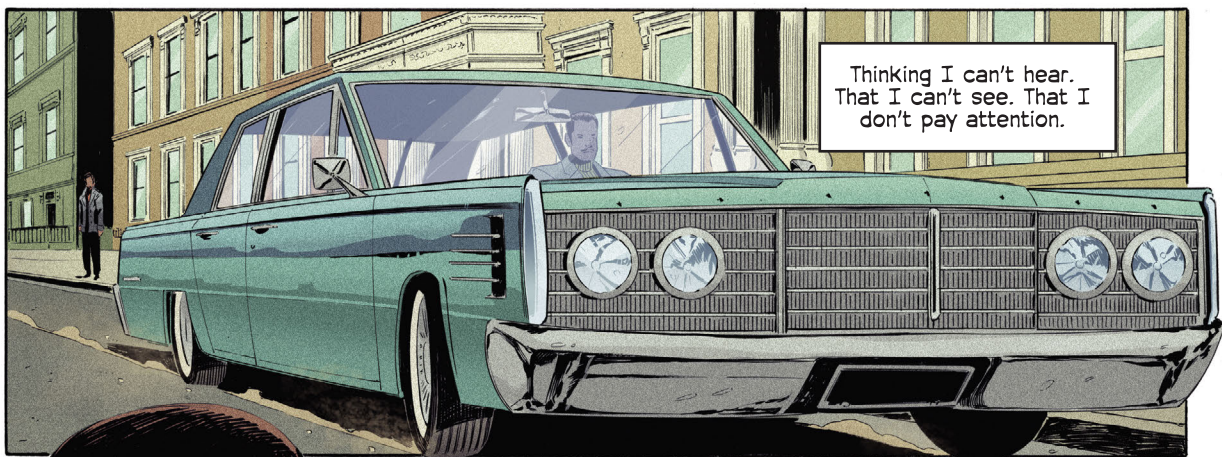
...BUT PERHAPS WE CAN **HELP** EACH OTHER.



Vernon Gates, one of the most powerful men in Harlem--*in all of New York*--keeping company with a gangster like Junius Tate, and all of 'em after the same thing.



And me, caught in the middle, with *everyone* thinking I don't know my ass from a hole in the ground.



Thinking I can't hear.
That I can't see. That I
don't pay attention.



The quickest way
to lose the war is to
underestimate the enemy.



When someone underestimates you, it means they don't expect much from you.

Maybe they expect nothing at all.



No matter what, it means they think they've got it all figured out.

They *think* they know you.

Think they know me.



If they knew me--*really* knew me--they'd know better.







TOLD YOU
SOMEONE WAS
FOLLOWING ONE
OF US. NOW WE
KNOW WHO.

GOOD
LOOKING
OUT.

WHAT TOOK
YOU SO LONG?
HE COULD'VE
SHOT ME.



WANTED TO SEE
HOW YOU HANDLED
YOURSELF OUTSIDE
THE RING.



HOW'D
I DO?



I'D SAY IT'S
A **GOOD THING**
YOU DIDN'T KILL
THIS OFAY...



... 'CAUSE YOU
JUST **FUCKED UP**
A COP.

AND YOU
FUCKED HIM
UP GOOD.



ASSHOLE
NEVER IDENTIFIED
HIMSELF.



THE COPS
ARE PART OF
ALL OF THIS?

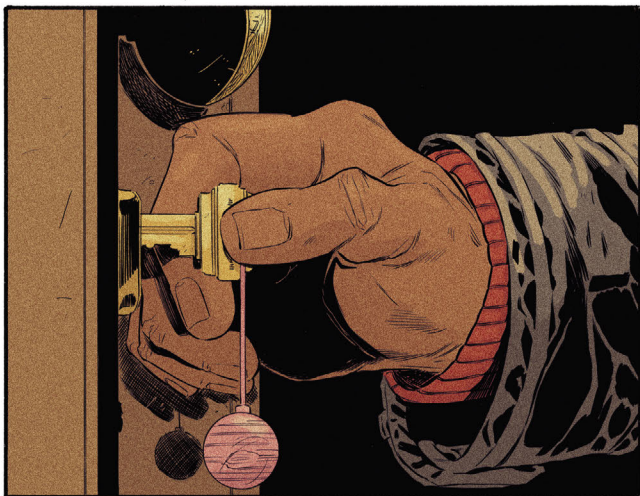


COPS ARE PART
OF **EVERYTHING**,
KID.

BUT I'M GUESSIN'
THIS AIN'T ABOUT COPS
SPECIFICALLY, SO MUCH
AS IT'S ABOUT THE
PORT AUTHORITY.



WHAT DO WE
DO WITH THIS DUMB
MOTHERFUCKER?

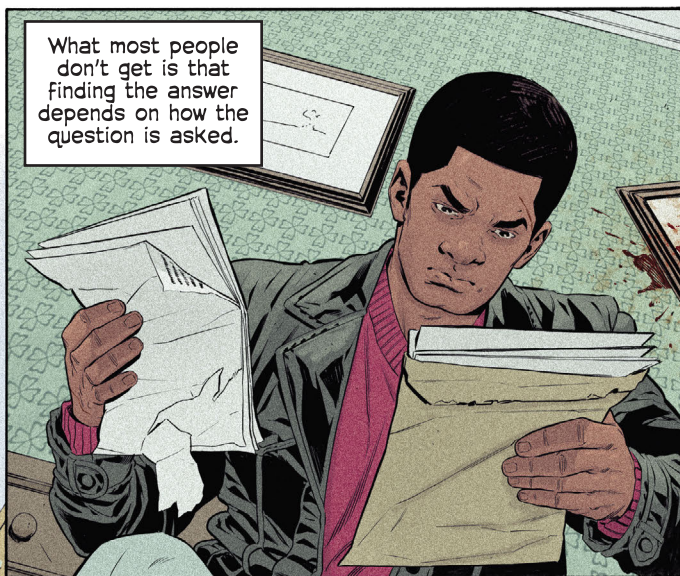




People think being a detective requires some kind of magic. There's no magic in detective work.



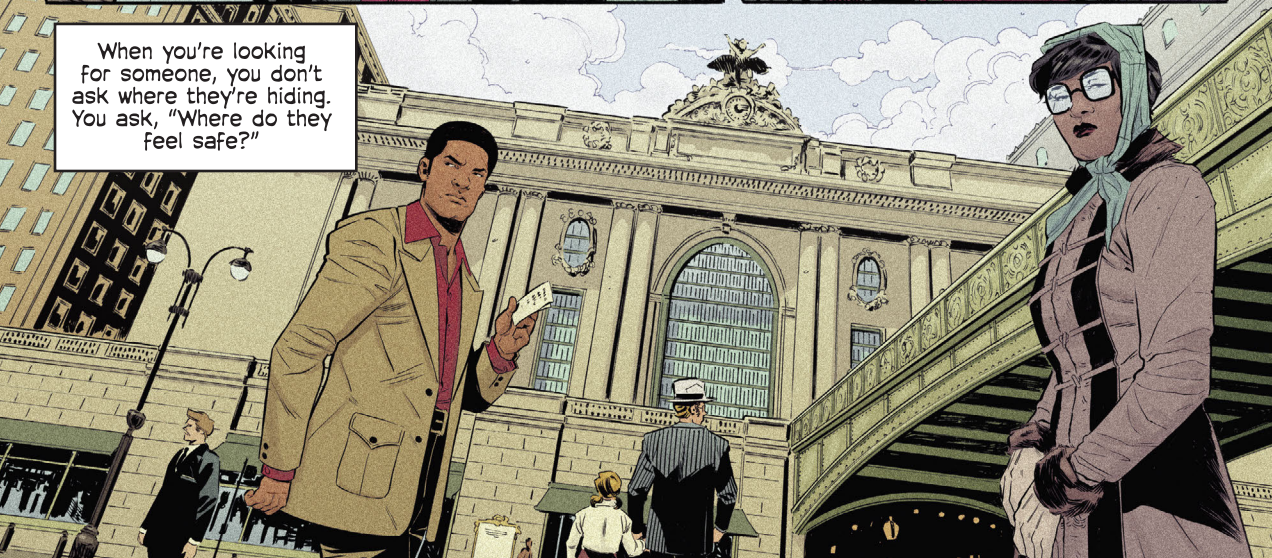
Fact of the matter is we're all detectives, 'cause life ain't nothing but a series of mysteries. We all want some kind of answer.



What most people don't get is that finding the answer depends on how the question is asked.



If you're thirsty and need water, you don't ask someone the time—you ask them where to find some water.



When you're looking for someone, you don't ask where they're hiding. You ask, "Where do they feel safe?"



Everyone looking for Marisol DuPree, and none of them asked the right question.

Everyone wanted to know where she was hiding, when they should've been asking where she would feel safe.

And where would a scared girl want to go in order to feel safe?



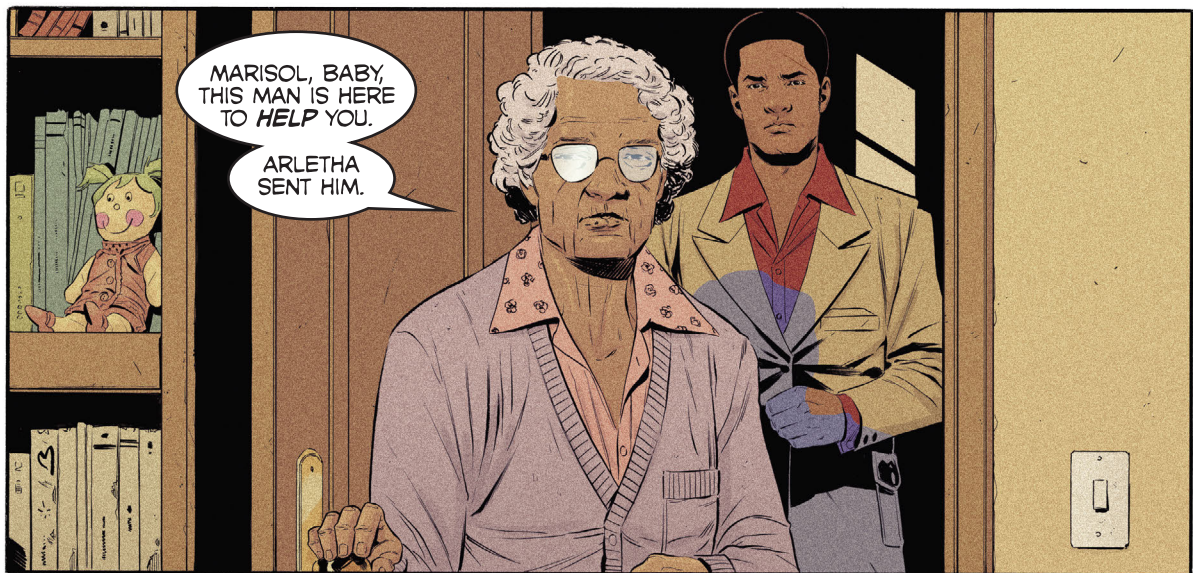
Dorothy wanted to go back to Kansas.

YES?
HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, MA'AM.
I'M HERE TO TALK TO MARISOL.
I KNOW SHE'S IN **TROUBLE**,
AND I'M HERE TO **HELP** HER.



ARLETHA SENT ME.



MARISOL, BABY,
THIS MAN IS HERE TO **HELP** YOU.

ARLETHA SENT HIM.



ARLETHA
REALLY SEND
YOU?

ARLETHA'S
DEAD.

OH, GOD.



DID...
DID JIMMY...
KILL HER?



NO. BUT JIMMY'S
DEAD TOO. SAME
WITH HIS FRIENDS.
THEY'RE ALL
DEAD.

OH, GOD.

HOW'D
YOU FIND
ME?



ARLETHA'S
PHONE BILL.
A LOT OF COLLECT
CALLS FROM
BRIDGEPORT.

I TOOK A
GUESS, AND IT
PAID OFF.



YOU'RE JOHN.
ARLETHA TOLD ME
ABOUT YOU. SHE SAID
YOU WERE DIFFERENT
FROM OTHER GUYS.
SPECIAL.

I...
I THINK
SHE...



NO.

I'M **NOT**
SPECIAL.

ARLETHA WAS
SPECIAL.

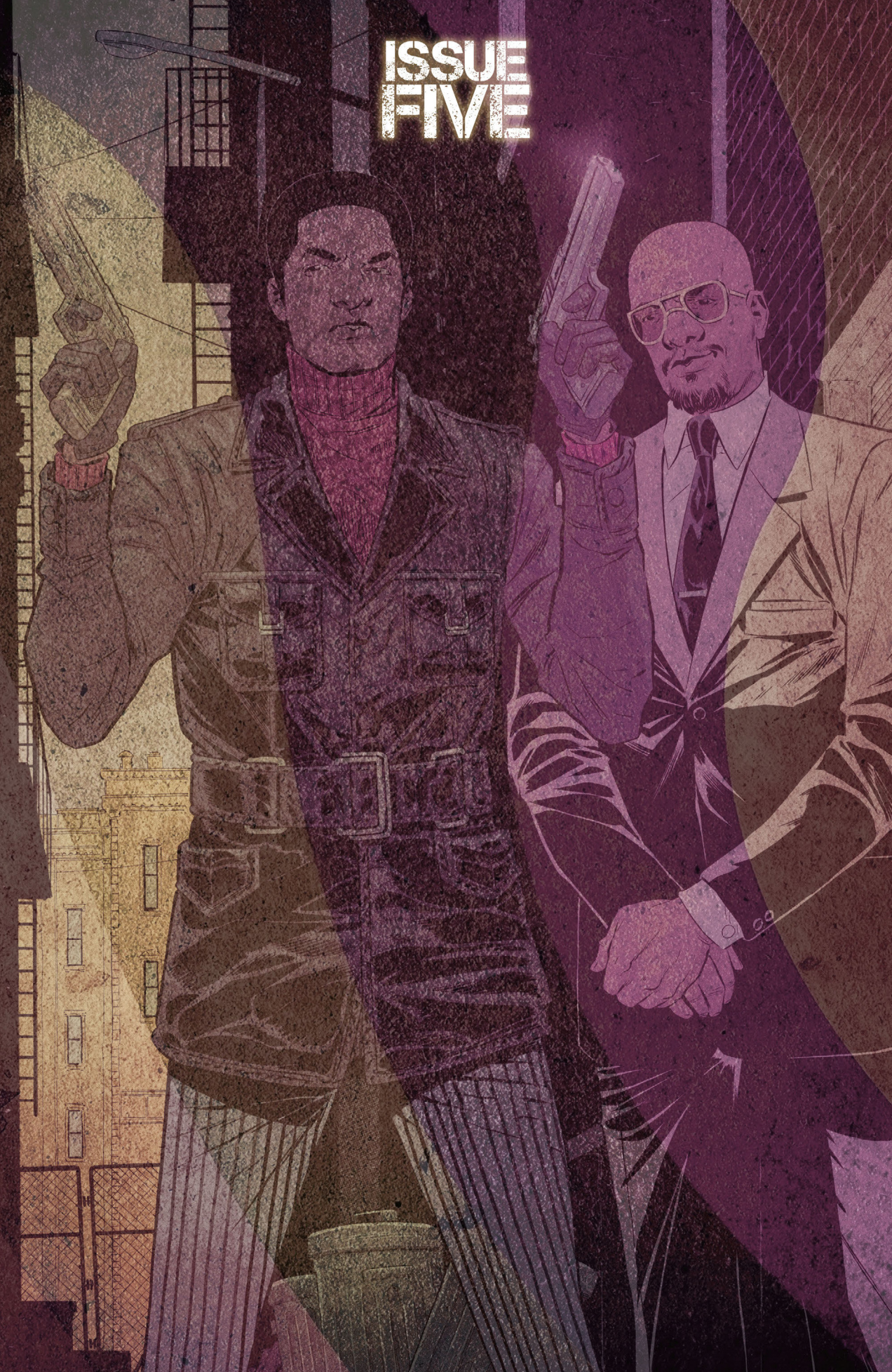
SHE WAS
THE BEST PERSON
SOMEONE LIKE YOU
OR ME COULD EVER
HOPE TO KNOW.

THAT'S WHY YOU'RE
GOING TO TELL ME
EVERYTHING YOU KNOW.
AND THEN...

AND
THEN WHAT?

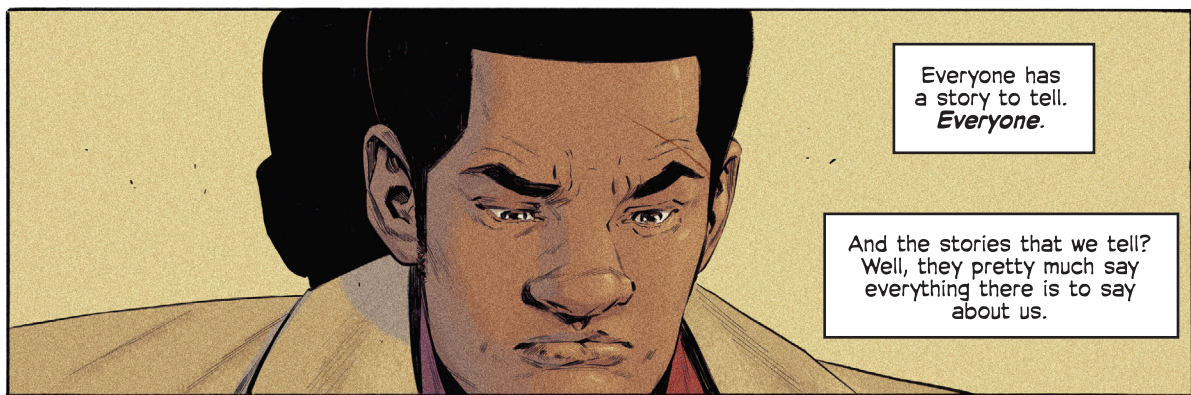
AND THEN I'M
GOING TO FIND HER
KILLERS, AND MAKE
THEM PAY.

ISSUE FIVE





ISSUE FIVE MAIN COVER BY
DENYS COWAN AND **BILL SIENKIEWICZ**
COLORS BY **IVAN NUNES**



Everyone has
a story to tell.
Everyone.

And the stories that we tell?
Well, they pretty much say
everything there is to say
about us.

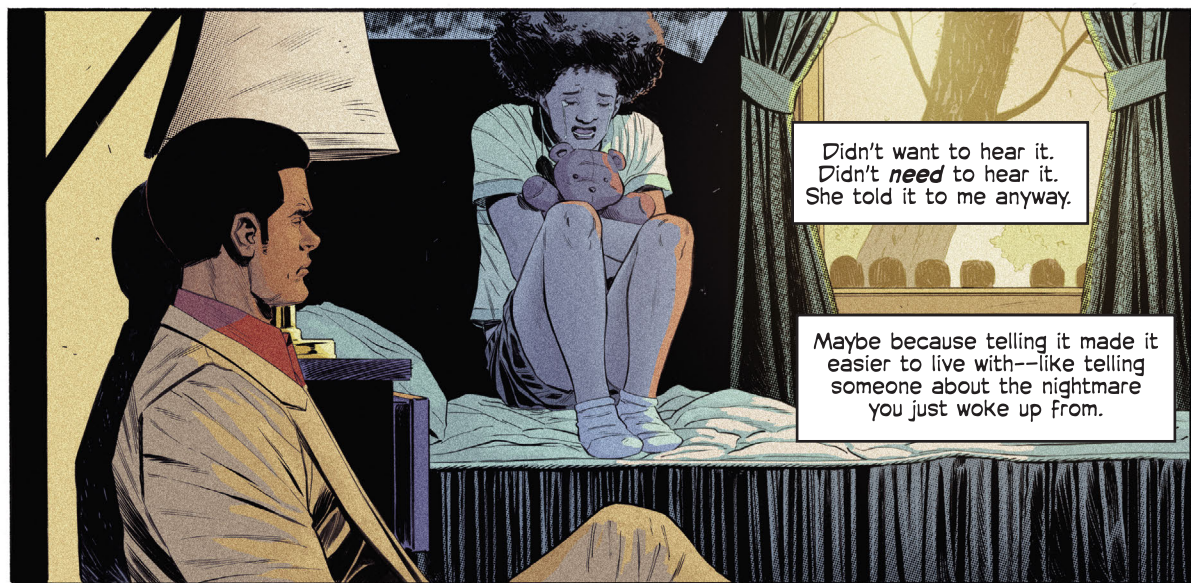


The first time I met
Marisol DuPree, I already
knew her story.



Knew the whole damn
thing before she finished
telling it.

Like one of those predictable movies,
where you know how it's gonna end ten
minutes after it's started.



Didn't want to hear it.
Didn't *need* to hear it.
She told it to me anyway.

Maybe because telling it made it
easier to live with--like telling
someone about the nightmare
you just woke up from.



Marisol DuPree
had been a beautiful
person in a **very**
ugly world.

Spent most of her life
in Bridgeport, living in Beardsley
Terrace, where damn near every
bad thing that can happen to a
beautiful girl happened to her.



The knight in shining armor that
saved her from this miserable life
was a hi-yella Cajun that called
himself Jimmy Style.

He was a pimp.

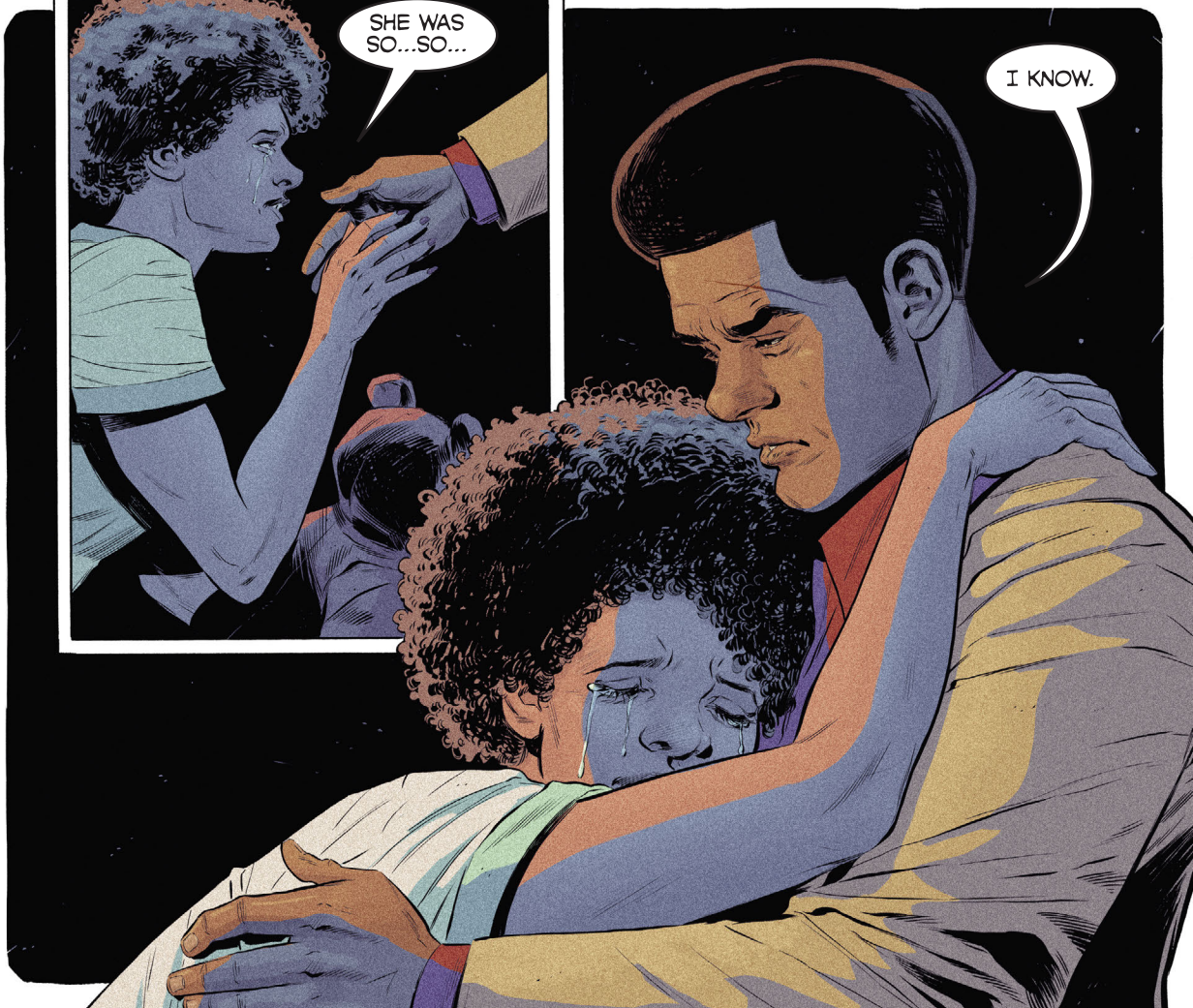


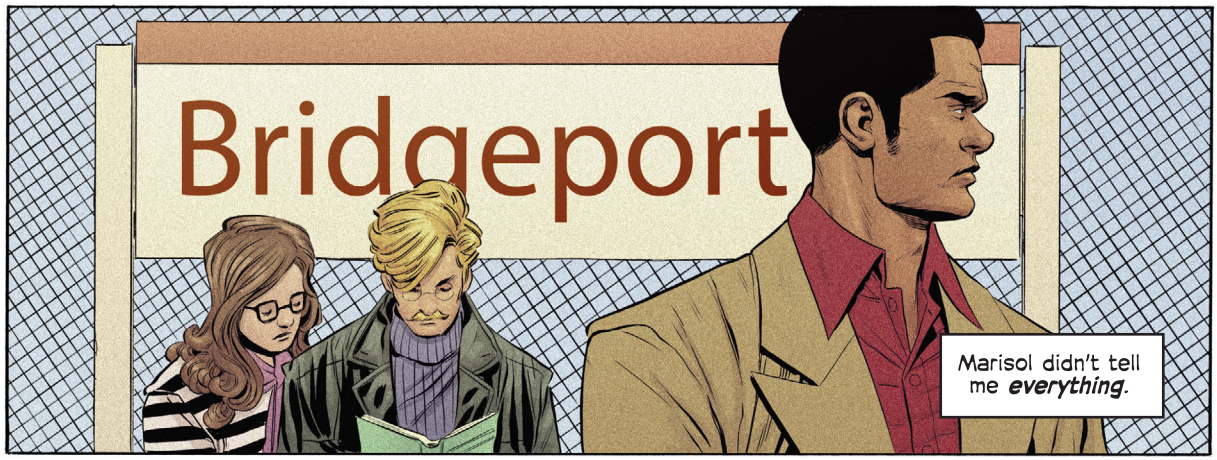
Marisol ended up in New York,
where she met the only person
that ever gave a shit about her.



Giving a shit got
that person killed.









Marisol told me enough that I could figure out the rest.

I heard Arletha tell them that she didn't know where to find Marisol.

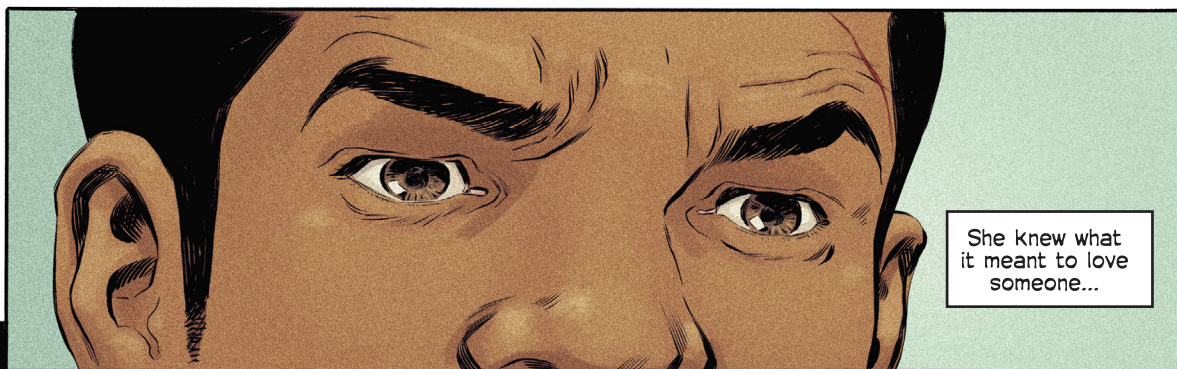


But she knew what they were looking for.

She knew.



She didn't say a word, because she knew what it meant to protect someone.



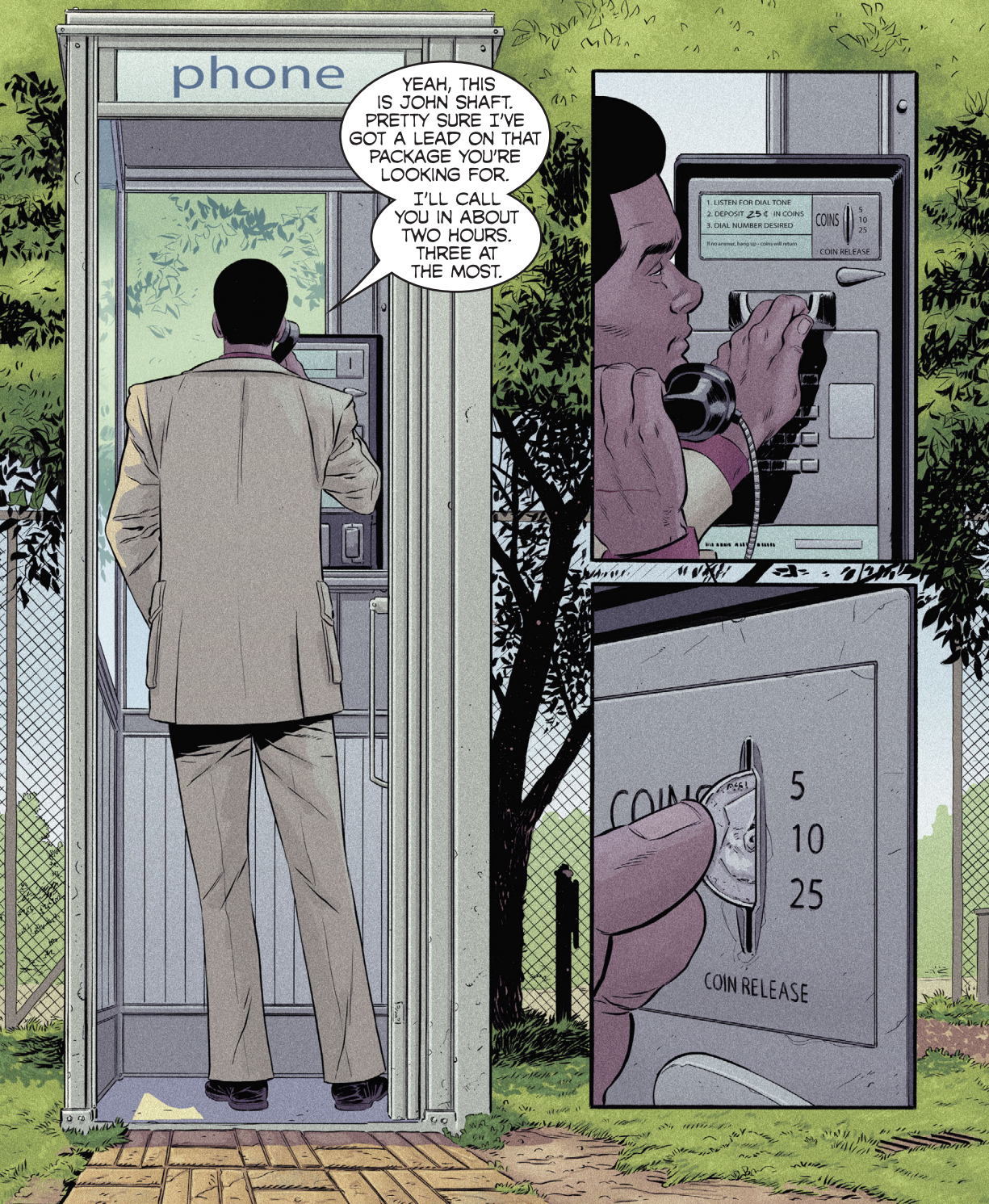
She knew what
it meant to love
someone...



...even if they might
not have been *worthy*
of that love.



And because of all
that...she's dead.

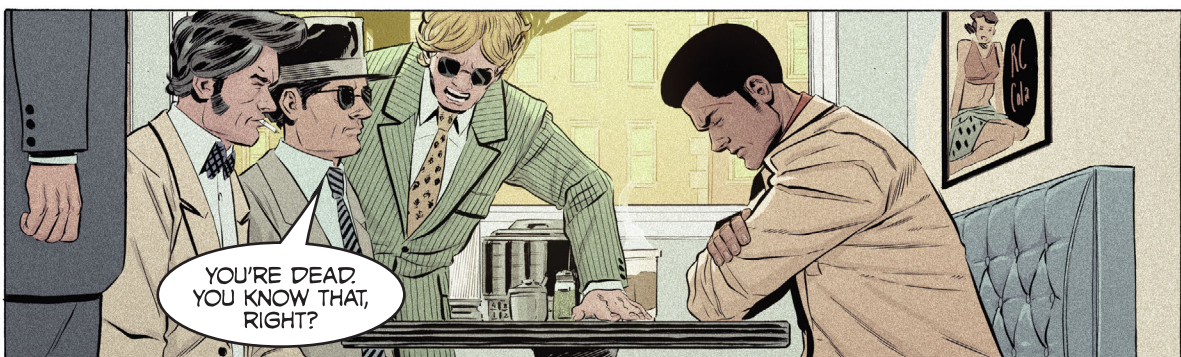
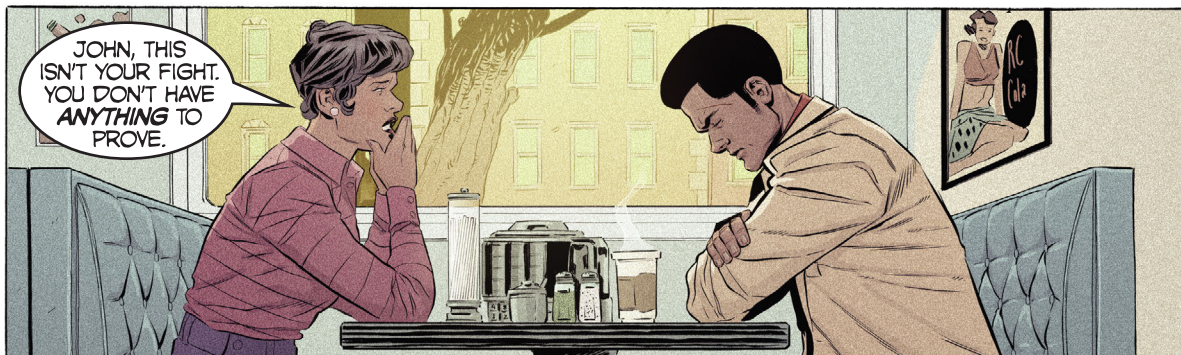
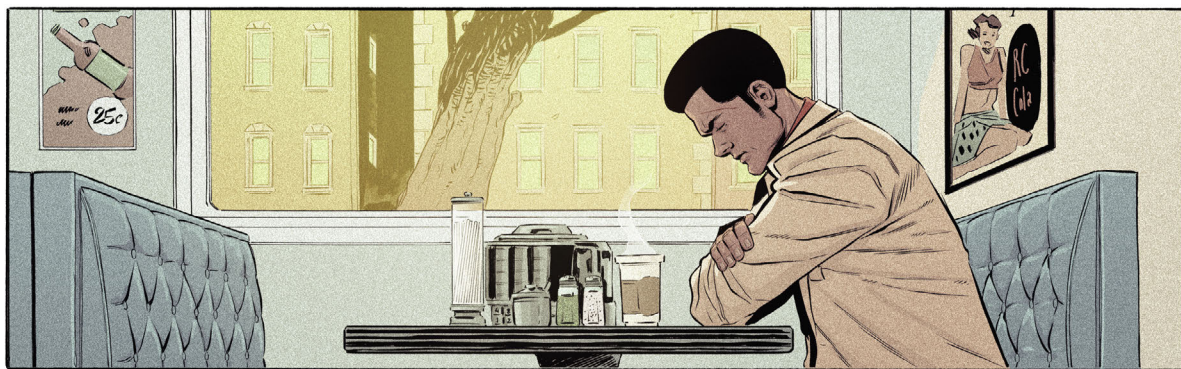


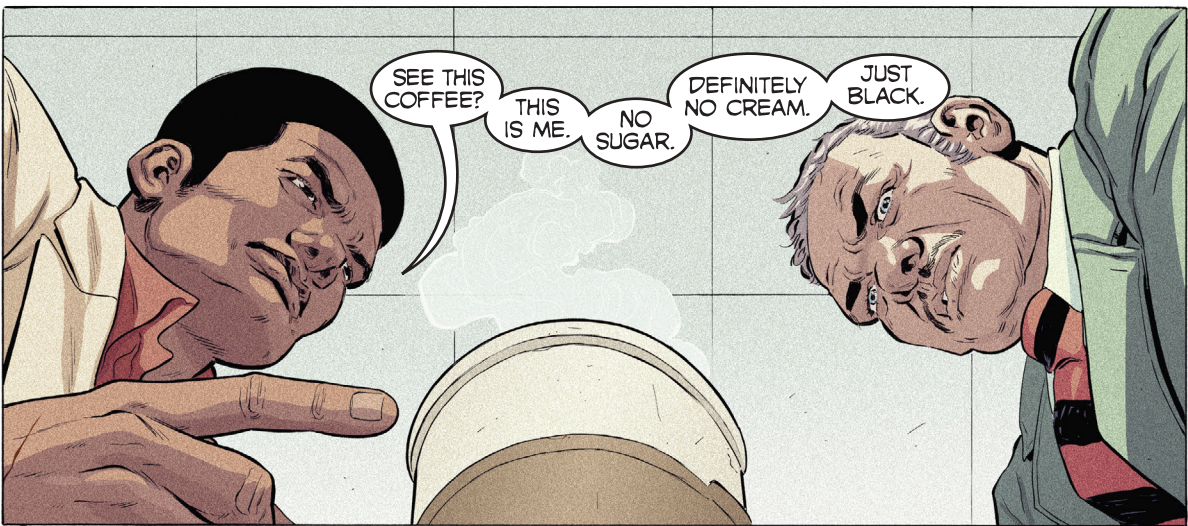
YEAH, THIS
IS JOHN SHAFT.
PRETTY SURE I'VE
GOT A LEAD ON THAT
PACKAGE YOU'RE
LOOKING FOR.

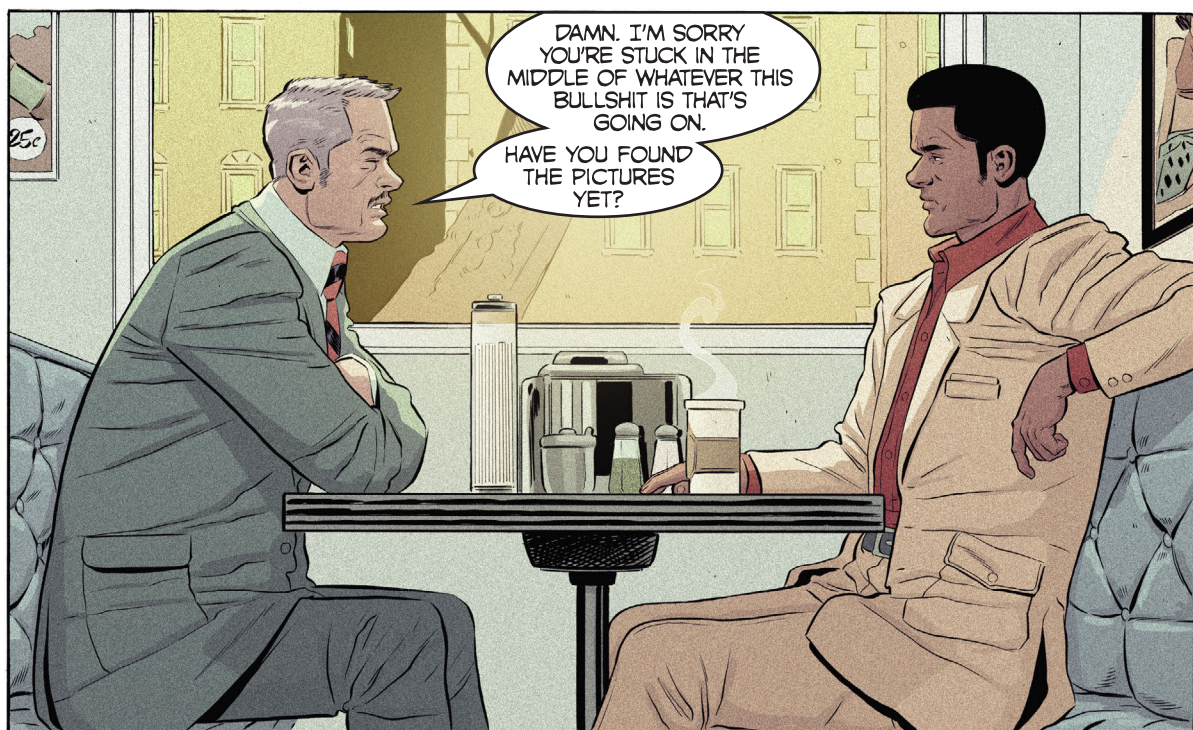
I'LL CALL
YOU IN ABOUT
TWO HOURS.
THREE AT
THE MOST.



HEY, IT'S
JOHN SHAFT.
CAN YOU MEET
ME?





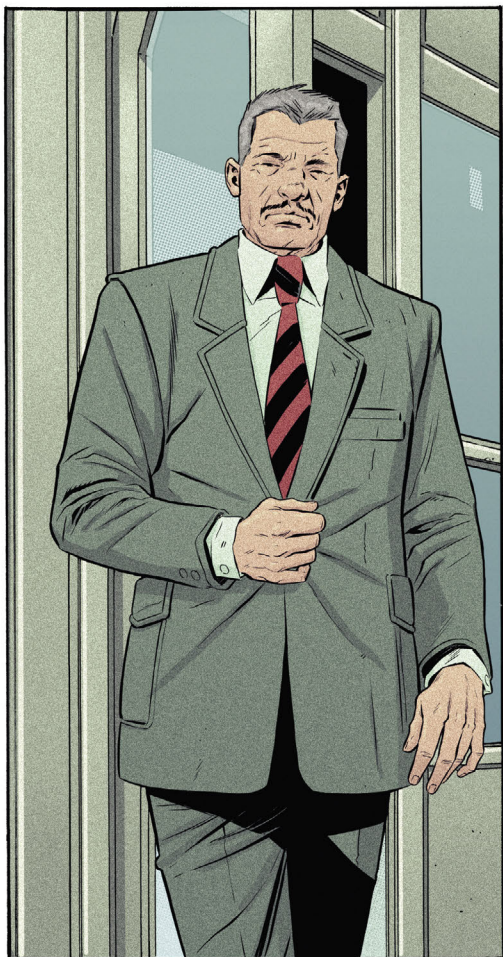


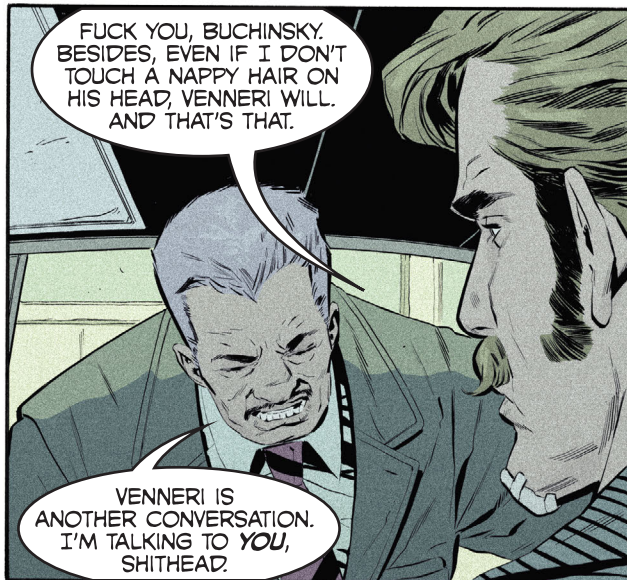


"WATCH YOUR ASS, JOHN.
PLAY THE GAME, AND DO
YOUR BEST TO STAY ALIVE."

"WISH I HAD MORE
ADVICE THAN THAT.
OR **BETTER** ADVICE.
BUT I DON'T."







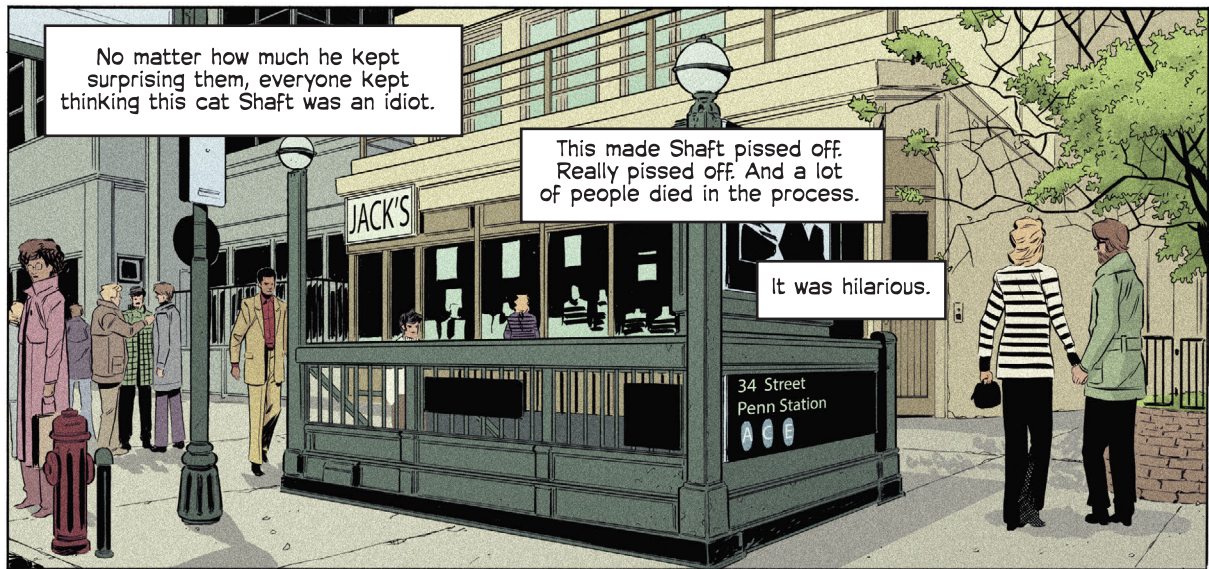


He was minding his own business, and got caught up in some bullshit.



Everyone around him assumed he was *stupid*.

They *assumed* he was just another dumb nigger.



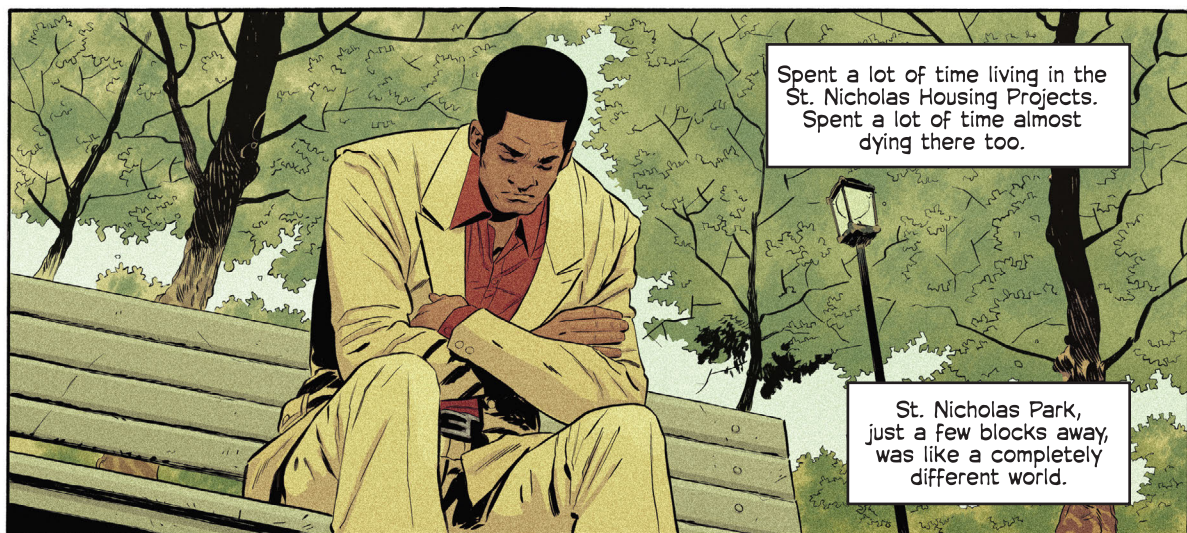
No matter how much he kept surprising them, everyone kept thinking this cat Shaft was an idiot.

This made Shaft pissed off. Really pissed off. And a lot of people died in the process.

It was hilarious.



I guess you had to be there.



Spent a lot of time living in the St. Nicholas Housing Projects. Spent a lot of time almost dying there too.

St. Nicholas Park, just a few blocks away, was like a completely different world.



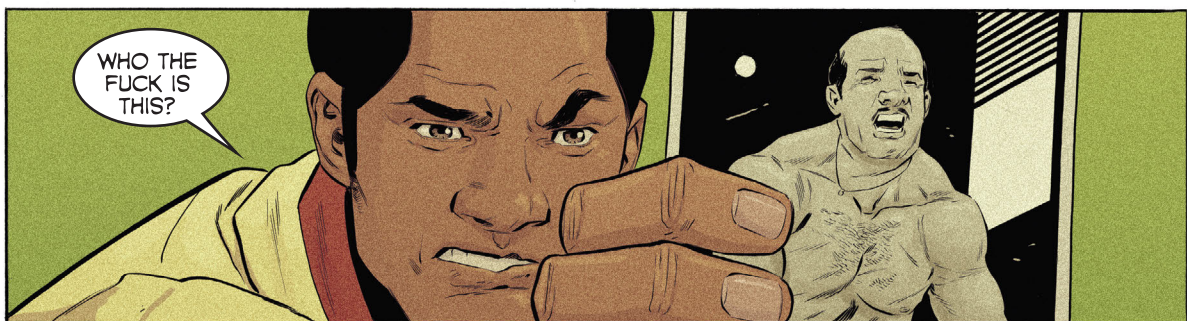
Of course, the ugly shit from the rest of the world always found its way into the park. I *know* this.

I used to come here to mug people.

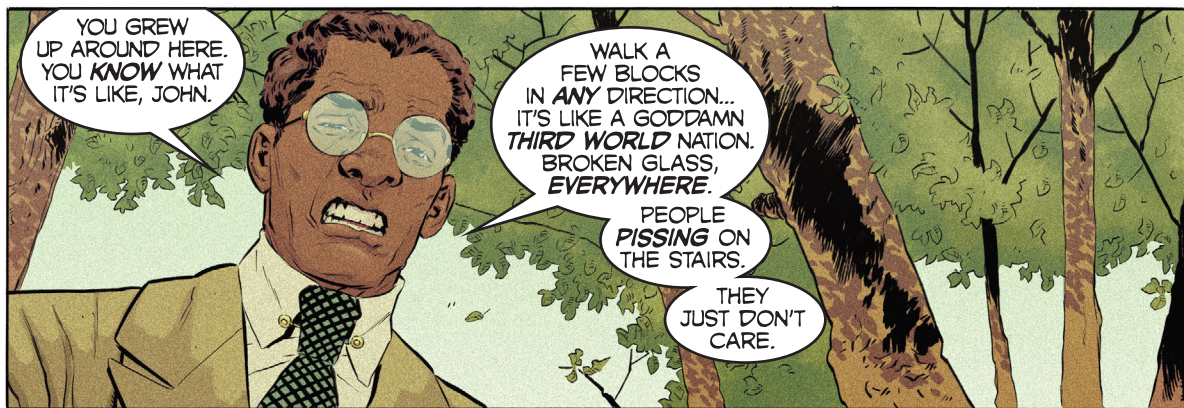


I ASSUME YOU HAVE WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR.

I KNOW WHERE TO GET YOUR PRECIOUS PACKAGE. BUT FIRST, I WANT ANSWERS.



WHO THE FUCK IS THIS?



YOU GREW UP AROUND HERE. YOU **KNOW** WHAT IT'S LIKE, JOHN.

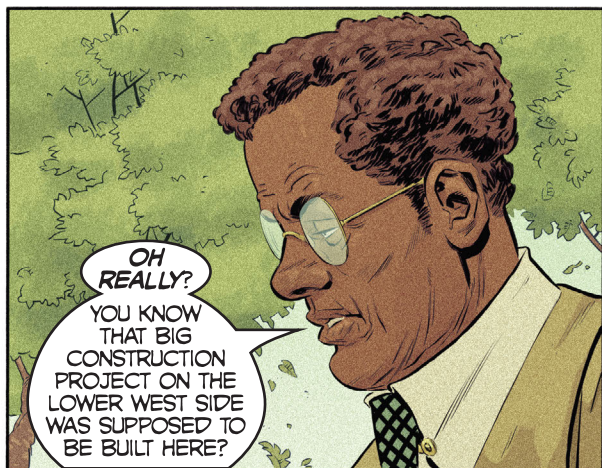
WALK A FEW BLOCKS IN **ANY** DIRECTION... IT'S LIKE A GODDAMN **THIRD WORLD** NATION. BROKEN GLASS, **EVERYWHERE**.

PEOPLE **PISSING** ON THE STAIRS.

THEY JUST DON'T CARE.

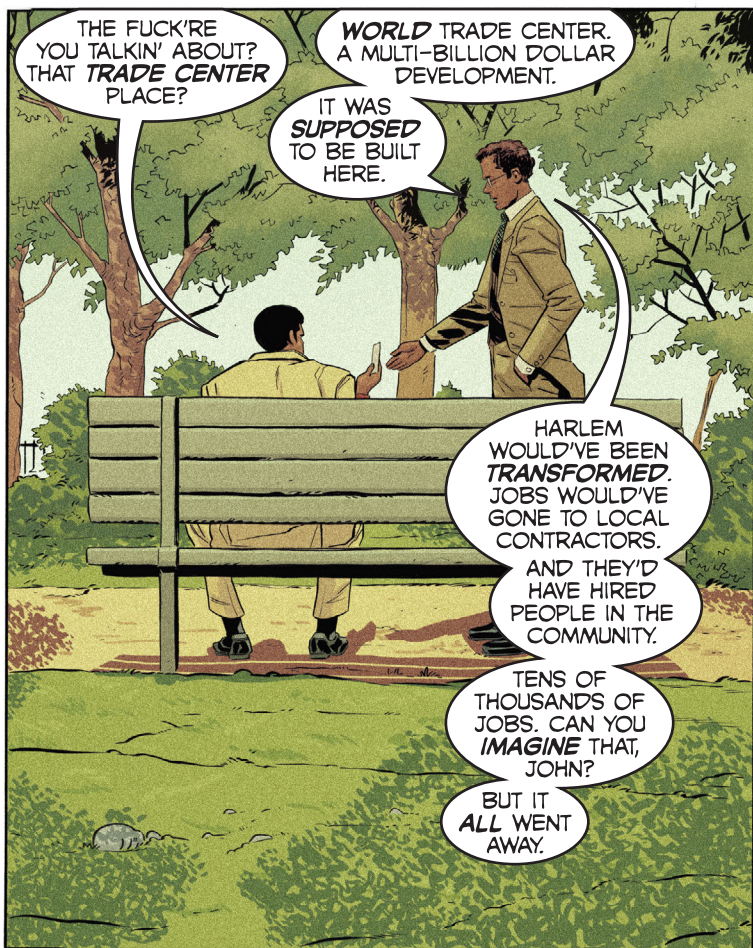


THERE'S **NOTHING** ABOUT HARLEM YOU CAN TELL ME THAT I DON'T ALREADY KNOW.



OH REALLY?

YOU KNOW THAT BIG CONSTRUCTION PROJECT ON THE LOWER WEST SIDE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE BUILT HERE?



THE FUCK'RE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT? THAT **TRADE CENTER** PLACE?

WORLD TRADE CENTER. A MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR DEVELOPMENT.

IT WAS **SUPPOSED** TO BE BUILT HERE.

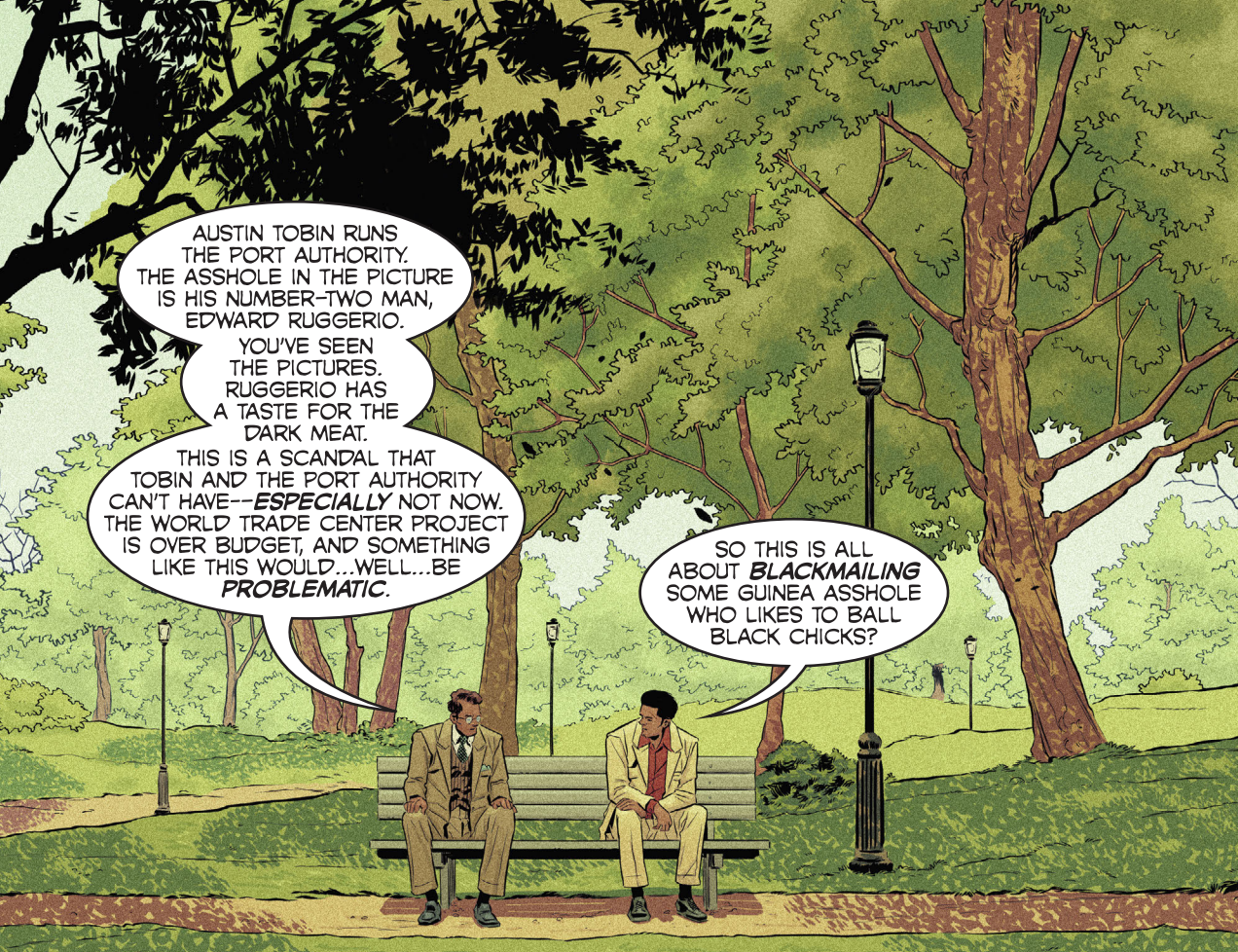
HARLEM WOULD'VE BEEN **TRANSFORMED**. JOBS WOULD'VE GONE TO LOCAL CONTRACTORS. AND THEY'D HAVE HIRED PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY.

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF JOBS. CAN YOU **IMAGINE** THAT, JOHN?

BUT IT **ALL** WENT AWAY.



THIS CRACKER IS THE KEY TO GETTING A SLICE OF THE PIE THAT WAS STOLEN FROM US.

A wide shot of a park with large trees and a path. Two men are sitting on a wooden bench. The man on the left is older, with glasses, wearing a tan suit and a patterned tie. The man on the right is younger, wearing a light-colored suit jacket over a red shirt. They are both looking towards the right. A speech bubble from the older man is on the left, and another from the younger man is on the right.

AUSTIN TOBIN RUNS
THE PORT AUTHORITY.
THE ASSHOLE IN THE PICTURE
IS HIS NUMBER-TWO MAN,
EDWARD RUGGERIO.

YOU'VE SEEN
THE PICTURES.
RUGGERIO HAS
A TASTE FOR THE
DARK MEAT.

THIS IS A SCANDAL THAT
TOBIN AND THE PORT AUTHORITY
CAN'T HAVE--**ESPECIALLY** NOT NOW.
THE WORLD TRADE CENTER PROJECT
IS OVER BUDGET, AND SOMETHING
LIKE THIS WOULD...WELL...BE
PROBLEMATIC.

SO THIS IS ALL
ABOUT **BLACKMAILING**
SOME GUINEA ASSHOLE
WHO LIKES TO BALL
BLACK CHICKS?

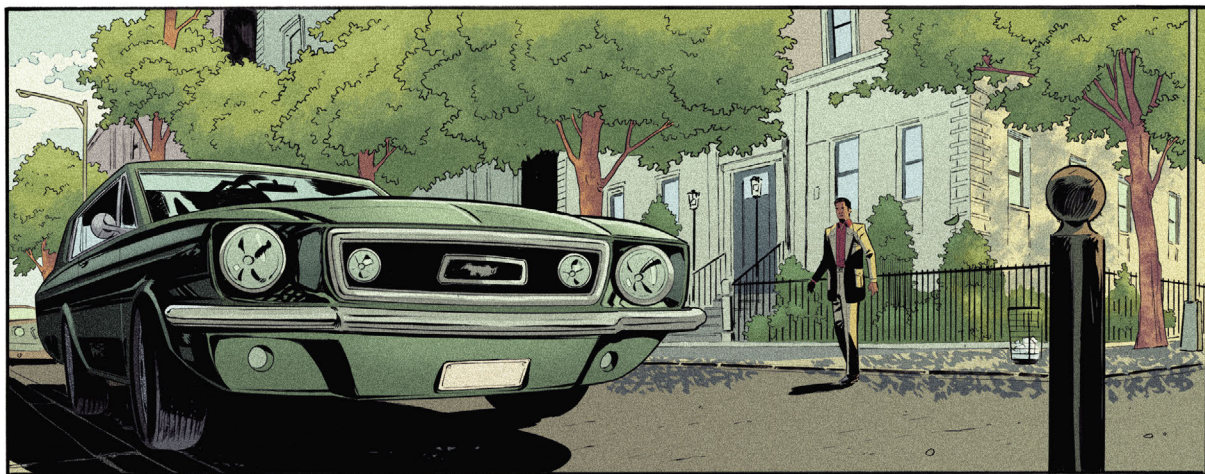
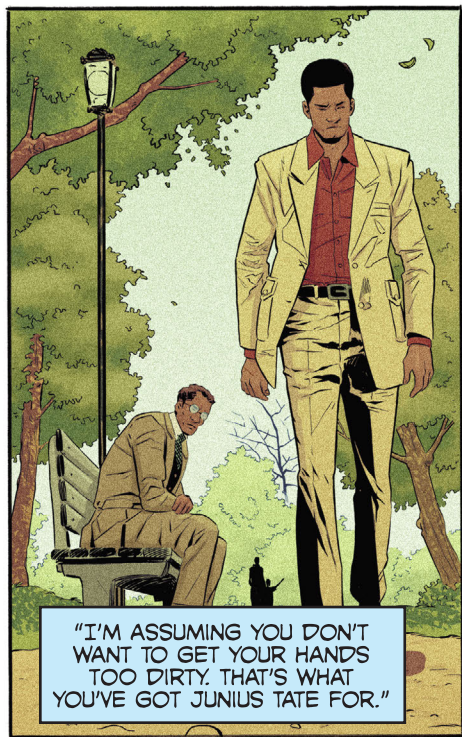
A medium shot of the two men on the bench. The older man is on the left, looking towards the younger man. The younger man is on the right, looking back at him. A speech bubble from the older man is on the left, and another from the younger man is on the right.

NO. IT IS ABOUT HAVING THE
LEVERAGE TO GET SOME BLACK
CONTRACTORS HIRED ON TO THIS
PROJECT, AND BRINGING SOME OF
THE MONEY BACK UPTOWN.

HARLEM IS A WASH.
THE COMMUNITY **LOST** ON
THIS ONE. BUT SOME OF THE
PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE--**SOME**
OF THE COMPANIES THAT
EMPLOY THOSE PEOPLE--CAN
STILL GET SOMETHING OUT
OF THIS.

A close-up shot of the younger man's face. He has a serious, almost angry expression. A speech bubble is on the left.

FUCK ME.
THIS IS ALL ABOUT
REAL ESTATE.



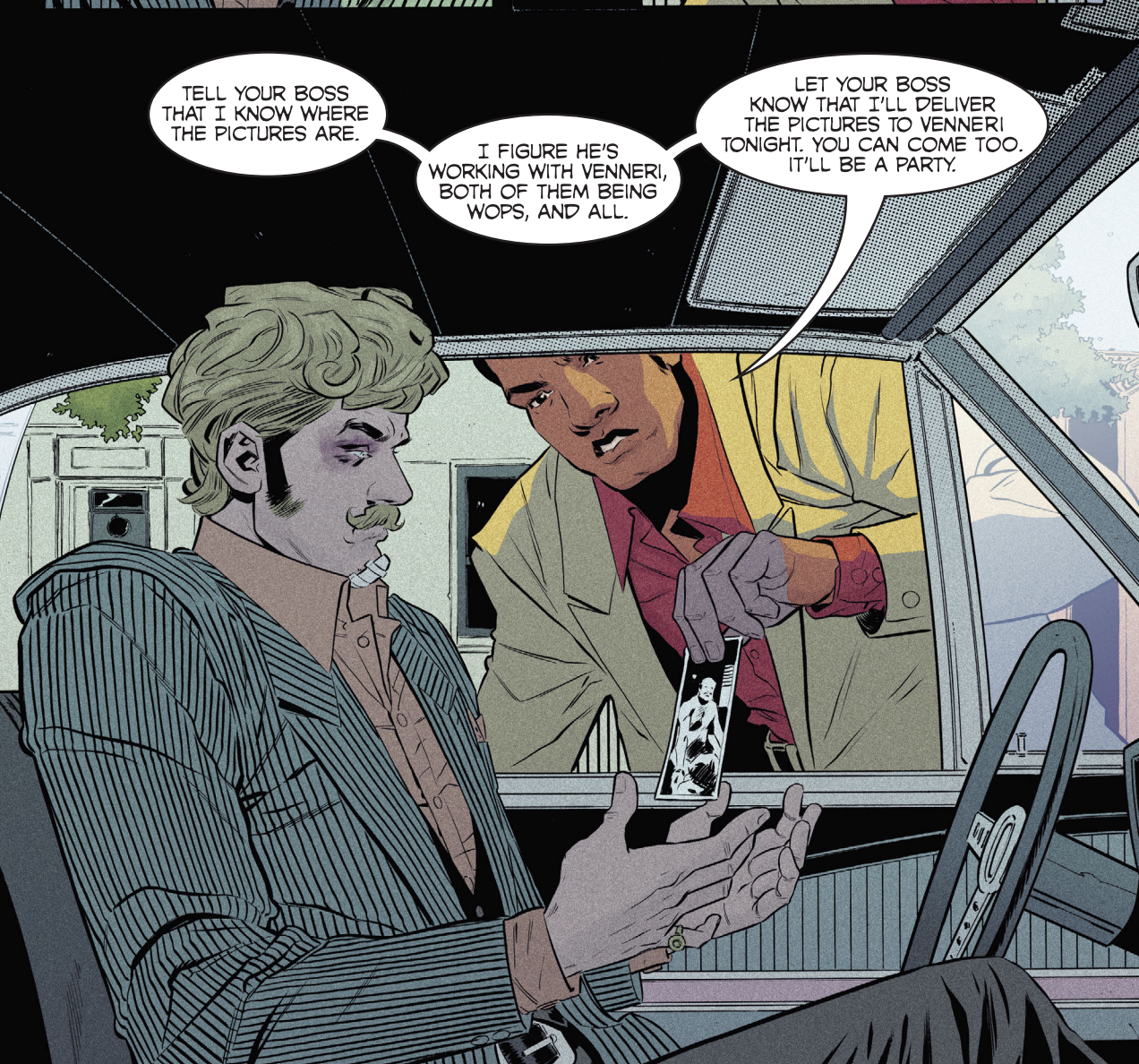


FUCK YOU,
SPADE.



NO. IT'S SHAFT.
YOU'RE THINKING OF
THE DETECTIVE FROM THE
BOOKS. BOGART PLAYED
HIM IN THAT ONE MOVIE.
I'M REAL. HE'S NOT.
HONEST MISTAKE.

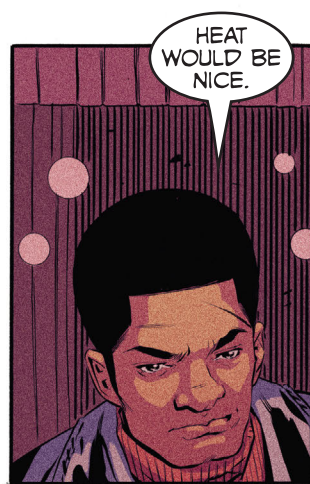
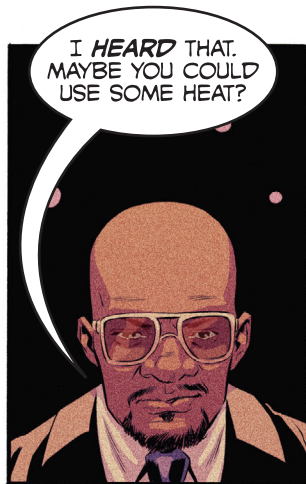
DON'T
MAKE IT
AGAIN.



TELL YOUR BOSS
THAT I KNOW WHERE
THE PICTURES ARE.

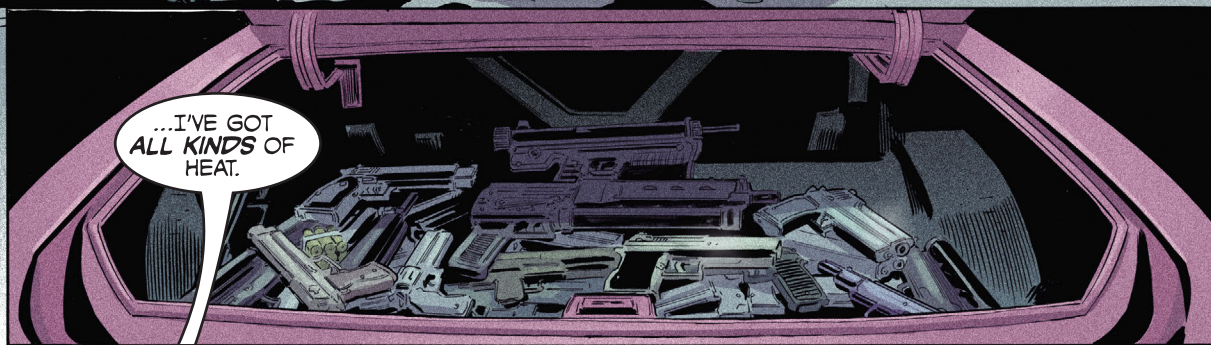
I FIGURE HE'S
WORKING WITH VENNERI,
BOTH OF THEM BEING
WOPS, AND ALL.

LET YOUR BOSS
KNOW THAT I'LL DELIVER
THE PICTURES TO VENNERI
TONIGHT. YOU CAN COME TOO.
IT'LL BE A PARTY.





AS YOU CAN SEE...



...I'VE GOT
ALL KINDS OF
HEAT.



HOW MUCH FOR
THESE, PLUS SOME
EXTRA ROUNDS?



SHIT, FOR YOU,
IT'S **ALL GOOD**,
JOHNNY.

HELL, MAN,
THIS DON'T EVEN
COVER WHAT I **OWE**
YOU FOR THAT ONE
TIME.

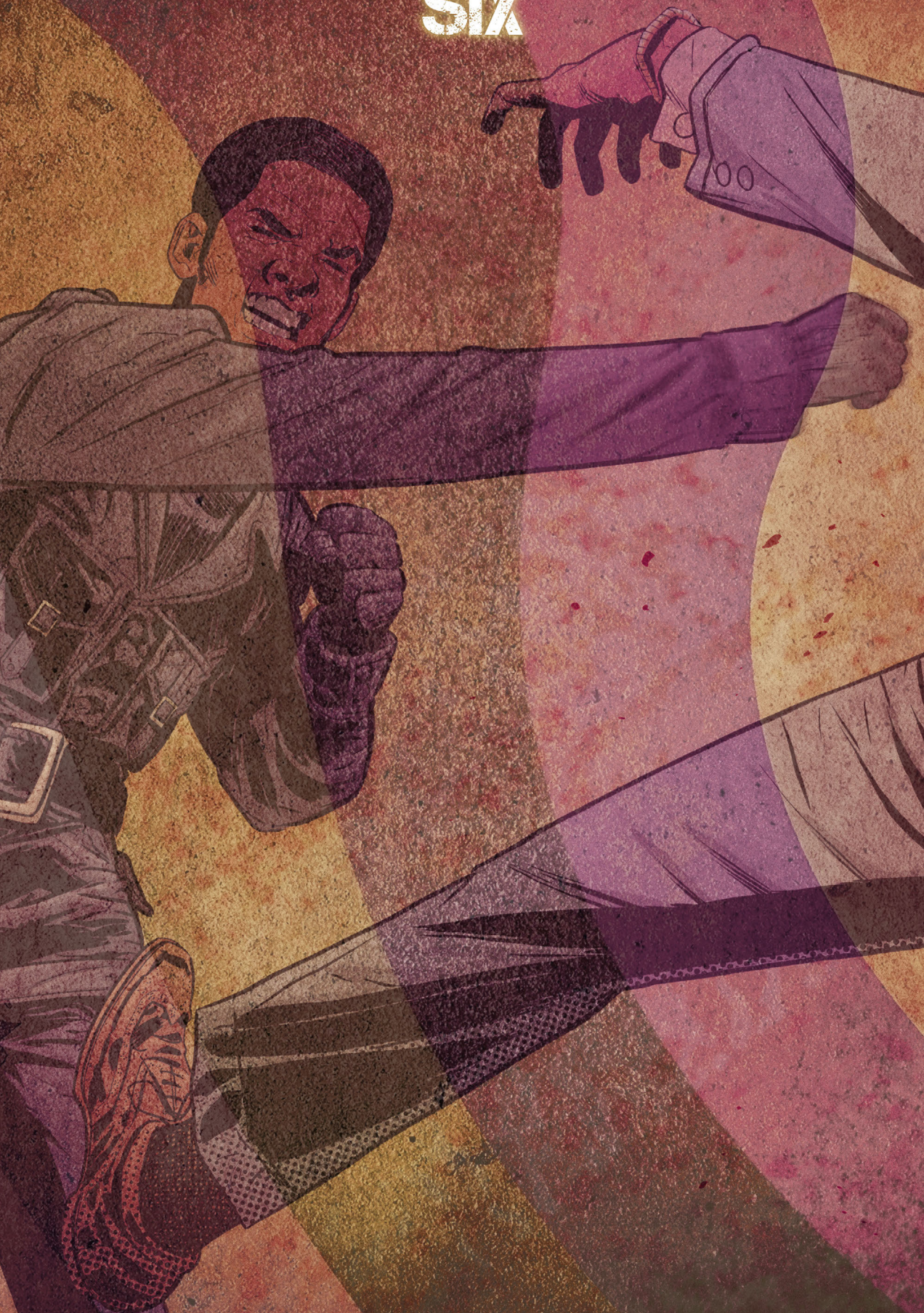
RIGHT
ON.



I WOULDN'T
WANT TO BE WHOEVER
THE FUCK IT IS THAT'S ON
YOUR *WRONG SIDE*,
NO SIR.

NO, MAN.
YOU WOULDN'T.

ISSUE SIX





ISSUE SIX MAIN COVER BY
BILL SIENKIEWICZ



Who are we?

We walk through life
from one moment to
the next.



One experience
to the next.

Each experience
adds to who we are.



Each step defines
us a little more than
the last one.

The moments.

The experiences.



The steps that
we take...

...the steps that
I've taken...



...that's who we are.

It's who I am.





"YOU LOOK **CONFUSED**,
SERGEANT."

"I GUESS I AM."



"WHAT ABOUT **HILL 881**
CONFUSES, YOU,
SERGEANT SHAFT?"

"WITH ALL RESPECT,
LIEUTENANT..."



...WHY THE FUCK
ARE WE RISKING
OUR LIVES OVER
A HILL?



**STRATEGIC
SIGNIFICANCE.**
THAT'S ALL YOU
NEED TO KNOW,
SERGEANT.





...HE'S LATE.
WHERE THE HELL'S
THIS MOULINYAN THAT'S
SUPPOSED TO **TAKE CARE**
OF EVERYTHING?

HE'LL
BE HERE.
YOU
KNOW HOW
THESE NIGGERS
ARE--THEY'RE
ALWAYS LATE.



SHIT, SHOW ME A SPADE,
AND I'LL SHOW YOU
SOMEONE THAT'LL BE
LATE TO HIS OWN
FUNERAL.



THAT'S PRETTY
FUNNY, BOSS.



YEAH,
PRETTY FUNNY,
FOR A DUMB
DAGO.





WRONG-
NIGGER-TO-FUCK-
WITH IS MY MIDDLE
NAME.

TELL ME
ONE THING.
WHO KILLED
HER?





**SHE
HAD A
NAME!**







I can still
see her face.



I can still
feel her touch.



I can still smell her.
I can taste her.



I can still hear the
sound of her voice.



And I can
hear her crying.



She's not crying
for justice.



She's not crying
for revenge.



She's crying
for me.

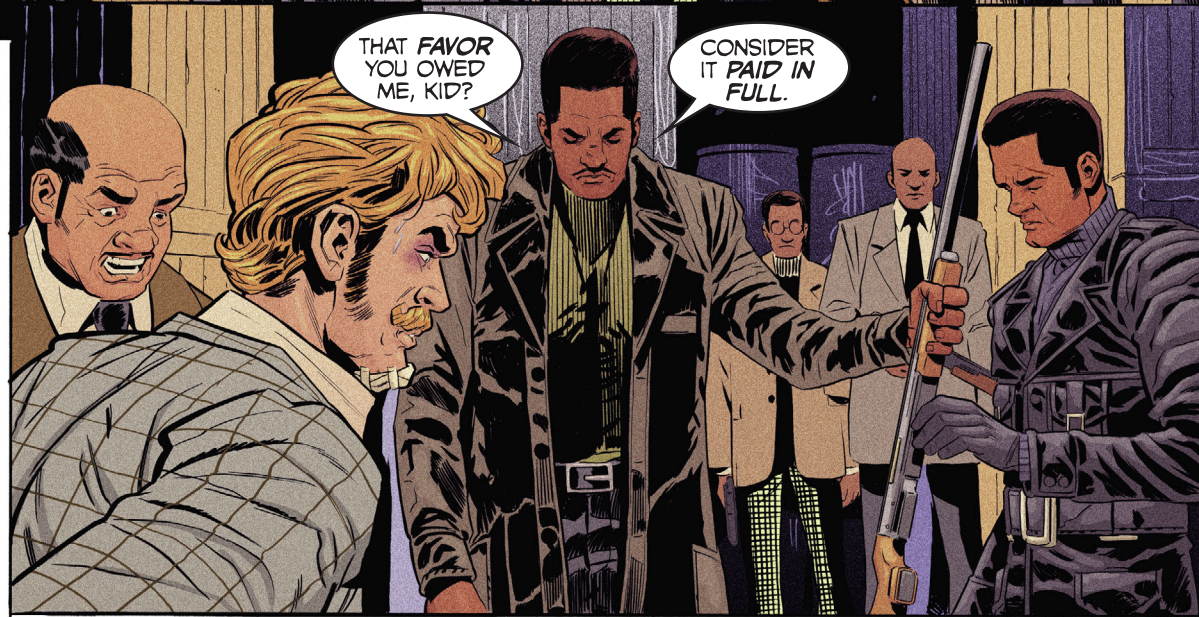
She's crying
for what I am.



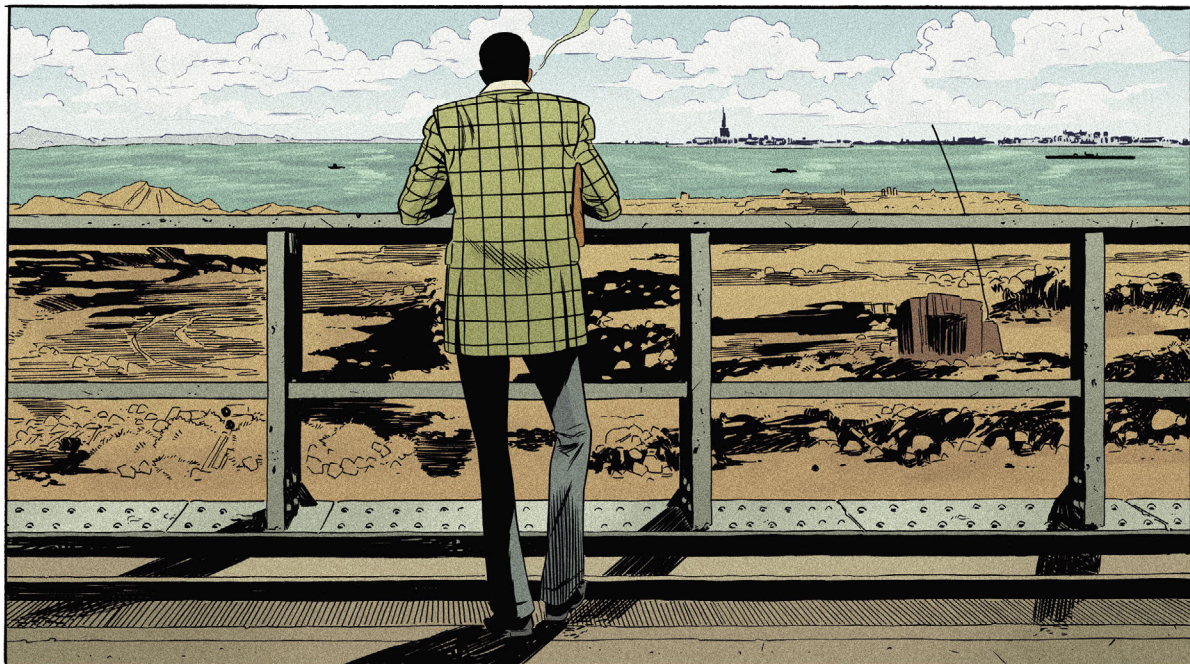
She's crying because
she's not here to save
the world from me.



She's crying because
that's the kind of
person she was.













DON'T KNOW IF
I CAN TRUST EITHER
OF YOU, AND HONESTLY,
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I DON'T TRUST
ANYONE.

AND I DON'T
GIVE A SHIT IF
EITHER OF YOU
TRUST ME.

JUST
KNOW
THIS...



...THESE PICTURES
WILL NEVER BE SEEN
AGAIN, AS LONG AS
NOTHING HAPPENS
TO THE GIRL.

MAKE SURE
YOUR FRIEND AT
THE PORT AUTHORITY
GETS WHAT I'M
SAYIN'...



ANYTHING HAPPENS
TO MARISOL DUPREE,
AND IT LEADS BACK
TO HIM, I KILL HIM.
UNDERSTAND?



JOHN, I NEED
YOU TO **BELIEVE**
ME...

LISTEN,
MAN, DO YOU
UNDERSTAND
WHAT I'M
SAYIN'?

YES.



GOOD.
THEN THERE
AIN'T A FUCKIN'
THING LEFT
TO SAY.



Arletha Havens.

Middle name,
Claudine.



The best person
I ever met.

Smart.

Caring.

Funny.

Beautiful.



She didn't have to die.

She could've lived.

She could've lived
with me at her side.



Instead, she did what
she could, to do what she
thought was right.

She protected someone
that needed protecting.

The least I can do
is the same thing.



Dedicated to
ERNEST TIDYMAN
1928-1984

BONUS MATERIAL



DESIGNING SHAFT

The initial instinct in designing John Shaft for comics would have been to make him look like actor Richard Roundtree. As the star of three Shaft movies and the television series, Roundtree is in many ways the embodiment of Shaft—at least the cinematic version of the character. In reality, Roundtree looked nothing like what Ernest Tidyman described in the Shaft novels. There is a long-running rumor that Tidyman didn't care for Roundtree's looks (he was too pretty), and the author hated the mustache. Since the comic was going to come from the character in the books, I pushed for a design more true to Tidyman's description. I gave Bilquis the photos of several actors that I felt matched the descriptions in the book. Among them were Robert Hooks, Idris Elba, and Tony King, the actor that most looks like the Shaft that I imagine.





JOHN JENNINGS
2014

UNUSED ILLUSTRATION BY **DAVID WALKER**
INKS AND COLORS BY **JOHN JENNINGS**

SHAFT SCRIPT PAGES

PAGE 4

Panel 1 - Big panel - Inside the dressing room at the arena. JOHN SHAFT is sitting on a table, dressed in a boxing robe. He is in his early 20s, but can easily pass for older. Shaft's trainer, EDDIE WINSLOW, black, late 40s, is wrapping his hands before the fight. Winslow is working on Shaft's left hand. DOC POWELL is also in the locker room.

CAPTION: Started boxing for real in 1964, when I went into the Marines. Got pretty good. Then I got shipped off to Vietnam in '65.

SHAFT: Where's Eli?

WINSLOW: Don't know. How's that feel?

Panel 2 - Shaft examining his left hand.

CAPTION: Started boxing again after I got home from the war. Needed the money. But more than that, I needed to hit something.

SHAFT: Feels good.

Panel 3 - Close up of Winslow wrapping the right hand. We can see a scar on the back of Shaft's right hand.

Panel 4 - Close in on Shaft. We can see a similar scar on his forehead, just above his left eye.

CAPTION: Thing about me is that I was a fighter long before I became a boxer.

SHAFT: What the fuck're they doin' here?



PAGE 5

Panel 1 - Big panel - Eli Jackson, Shaft's manager, entering the locker room. Jackson is accompanied by Junius Tate, Bamma Brooks, and perhaps one other goon.

CAPTION: Eli Jackson's my manager. His friends don't need any introductions.

CAPTION: Junius Tate. Gangster. Works for Knocks Persons, who runs Harlem.

CAPTION: Bamma Brooks. When I was a kid, he was the man - the next Joe Louis. That never happened. Took a dive in the fifth, and then became hired muscle for Tate.

JACKSON: Hey, Johnny. You ready for your big night? Got some friends I want you to meet.

TATE: Wha'sup, youngblood? Been hearin' lotta good things 'bout you. Cats 'round Harlem say you the next Cassius Clay.

Panel 2 - Shaft does not look impressed.

SHAFT: Man goes by Muhammad Ali these days.

Panel 3 - Tate still smiling.

TATE: Sheeeeeee-it, I don't care what the fuck the motherfucker calls himself. Names don't mean shit to me, youngblood.

Panel 4 - Shaft sitting on the table while Winslow wraps his hands. Shaft isn't even looking at Tate anymore, he's more concerned with what Winslow is doing.

SHAFT: I hear you talkin', but you ain't sayin' anything.



PAGE 6

Panel 1 - Shaft wearing his robe with the hood up over his head, accompanied by Winslow and Doc Powell, walking out of the locker room, past Tate.

CAPTION: A man like Junius Tate only wants one thing from a boxer like me.

TATE: Give 'em a good show, youngblood.

Panel 2 - Extreme close up of Shaft's face. We can see his eyes, and the scar on his forehead, but that is all.

CAPTION: But like I said, I was a fighter long before becoming a boxer.

Panel 3 - Flashback - Young Shaft, ten years earlier, about 13 or 14 years old. He is in a fight with another teenager, who is armed with a bicycle chain.

CAPTION: You can't ask a fighter to give up.

Panel 4 - Flashback - The other kid whipping Young Shaft in the face with the bicycle chain, as Young Shaft holds up his right hand to protect himself.

CAPTION: Boxing is a sport.

Panel 5 - Flashback - We see the chain tearing into the back of Young Shaft's hand and his forehead - this is where he got the matching scars.

CAPTION: Fighting is life or death.



SHAFT #1 PAGE 6

Inks by Bilquis Evely, Colors by Daniel Miwa

PAGE 18

Panel 1 - Tyrone and Shaft are completely in the alley, with their backs against the brick wall. The other gangsters are now in the alley well - four of them in total. Only one has his gun drawn.

CAPTION/SHAFT: Can't really describe what happened, but it was like someone had turned on a light switch.

CAPTION/SHAFT: No, that's not right. It wasn't like someone turned on a light switch. It was like someone unlocked the cage and let the animal out.

Panel 2 - Angle in on the gangsters.

CAPTION/SHAFT: Hadn't felt that way since I was in 'Nam.

Panel 3 - Tyrone, Shaft standing just a step or two behind him. Tyrone looks frightened. Shaft looks intense.

CAPTION/SHAFT: Concrete and skyscrapers had replaced rice paddies and jungles, but the feeling was the same.

Panel 4 - Shaft shoving Tyrone at the gangster with the gun.

CAPTION/SHAFT: Life and death.

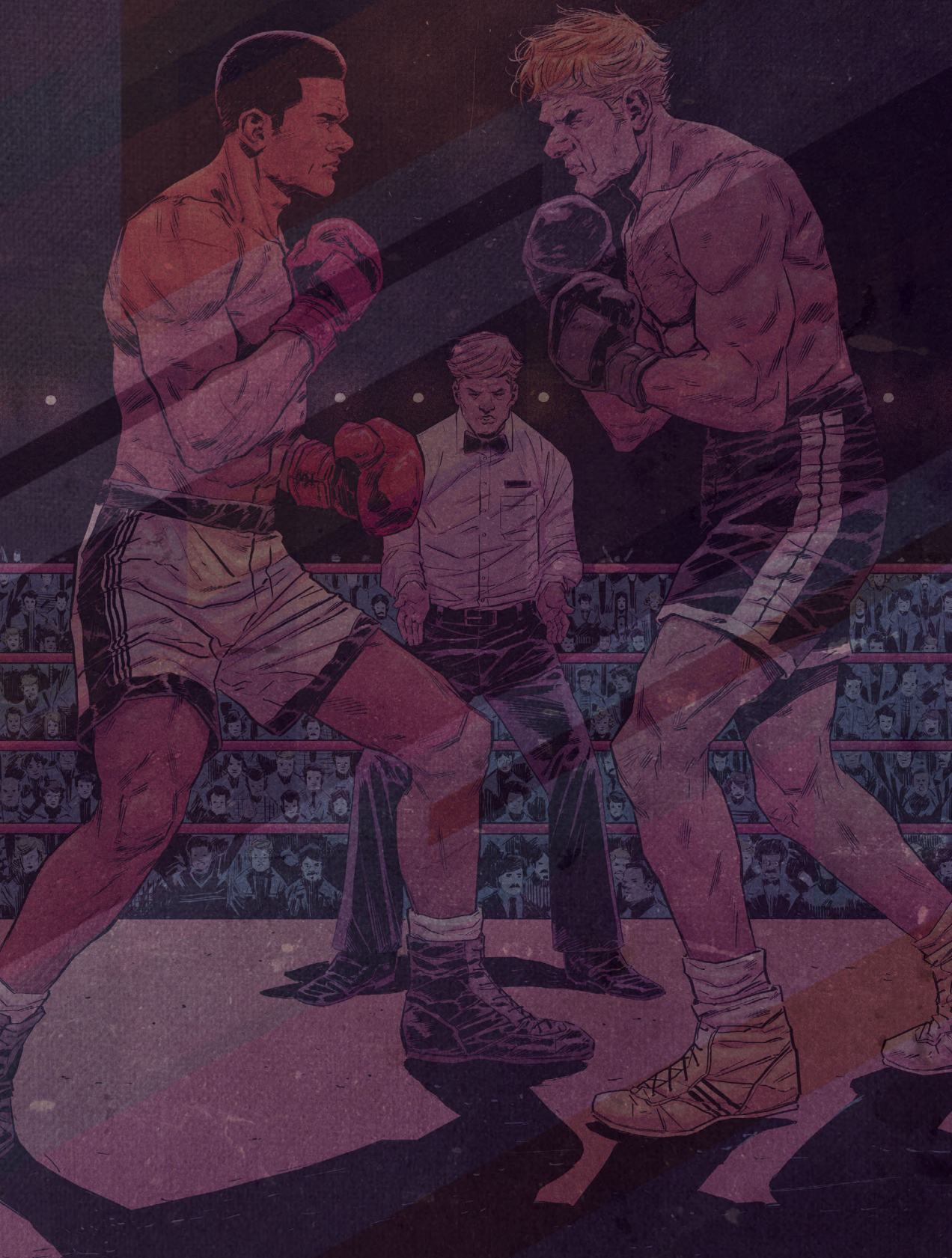
CAPTION/SHAFT: Live or die.

Panel 5 - Shaft has grabbed the arm of the gangster with the gun, and has managed to twist the gangster's arm in a way that he is pointing the gun at himself as it goes off.

CAPTION/SHAFT: It'd been two years since I last held a gun.



COVER GALLERY





ISSUE ONE VARIANT COVER BY
FRANCESCO FRANCAVILLA



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MICHAEL AVON OEMING



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